FROM THE DESERT TO WORLD CITIES
THE NEW TERRORISM

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Preface

Global terrorism has undergone a massive makeover with the rise of new terrorist groups. Since 2011, the Syrian civil war has breathed new life into jihadi militancy, providing an unprecedented wave of recruits, a large number of whom were ten years old or younger on 9/11. This new generation of jihadists has grown up knowing more about Iraq, Zarqawi and Facebook than about Bin Laden, Afghanistan or the mosque. Today, the world faces several jihadi threats: Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS or ISIL) and violent extremism in the Middle East, terrorist activities by Boko Haram in Nigeria, al Shabaab in Somalia, the Taliban and Al Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and competing militias in Libya.

Emerging as well as existing threats that have grown significantly over the past three years make a global response imperative. As a major threat to security and order in the 21st century, terrorism demands a more deliberative and effective response. The last two years has seen a dramatic increase in terror attacks globally: the recent attack in Texas, the attack at Parliament Hill in Ottawa, the attack against Charlie Hebdo in Paris, the Lindt cafe siege in the West, several terror attacks in Pakistan and several others in Africa including the Baga massacre and the Kenya University attack. It has been more than a decade since the 9/11 attacks in the United States, which shocked the international system, changing global perspectives on both the threat of terrorism and the tools required to prevent it. Although multilateral instruments against terrorism already exist, the unprecedented reach and potential of terrorist networks that have emerged recently constitute a new danger that challenges existing tools and institutions. In recent years, terrorist networks have evolved, and some have started operating as non-state actors. Taking advantage of porous borders and interconnected international systems—finance, communications, and transit—terrorist groups can reach every corner of the globe and have moved operatives, money and material across borders and through the crevices of the global economy. Terrorism has now moved from the desert to world cities.

No state, however powerful, can defend itself unilaterally against transnational terrorism. The EU and Asia have held several meetings and started various initiatives under the framework of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), among others. However, there is still a need for cooperation and coordination in all dimensions of counter-terrorism.

In this issue of *Panorama: Insights into Asian and European Affairs*, we have asked authors from various countries to shed light on the factors that have contributed to the recent development in the Middle East and to discuss the implications of terrorism on societies in Asia and Europe. Special attention was given to the recruitment of young

people, the attractiveness of terrorist groups to the youth, the role of religion and social media, as well as preventive de-radicalization measures.

[signature]

Dr. Wilhelm Hofmeister

The Rise of the Islamic State: Terrorism's New Face in Asia

Rohan Gunaratna

INTRODUCTION

A new Asian threat landscape is emerging. The Islamic State (IS) is eclipsing the traditional influence of Al Qaeda in Asia. The strength, size and influence of Al Qaeda-centric groups are diminishing and IS-centric groups are gathering momentum. Three dozen threat groups in Central, South, Southeast and Northeast Asia have pledged allegiance or expressed support to IS. The Asians that trained and fought in Pakistan and Afghanistan formed the nuclei of Al Qaeda-associated threat groups in Asia. Similarly, will the Asians returning from Syria and Iraq be motivated, networked and resourced to advance IS's interests regionally? With the growing popularity of IS, will they create and staff IS-associated threat groups?

Despite government efforts, at least 2500 Asians have travelled to the core area of Syria and Iraq. According to Global Pathfinder 2, Asia's dedicated database of group, personality and attack profiles, Central Asians, South Asians, Southeast Asians, Northeast Asians and Australian and New Zealand citizens travelled to the core area. As government security and intelligence services are still trying to build their capacities to fight the threat, the numbers are approximate and very likely on the lower side. What is evident is that IS has emerged as the dominant factor influencing both threat groups and vulnerable segments of our communities.

Based on interviews with returnees from Syria and Iraq, the focus of this paper is how an IS-centric threat landscape is developing in Southeast Asia. The developments in Southeast Asia may provide insights into how other regions can (a) prevent and respond to the current and emerging IS-centric threat environment and (b) cooperate with their international partners to mitigate the threat.

THE CONTEXT

Southeast Asian terrorist and extremist groups have been influenced by the ideology and methodology of Al Qaeda until recently. Al Qaeda provided the ideology, training, finance and broad direction to a dozen threat groups. Al Qaeda financed several attacks in the region including an operation to attack a US west coast target. Al Qaeda associate in Southeast Asia Jemaah Islamiyah and a breakaway faction of Al Qaeda in

the Malay archipelago staged the Bali attacks in 2002 and 2005 and the J.W. Marriott attack in 2003 respectively. Ten years later, Al Qaeda is being supplanted by IS, a group with greater reach and resources.

Jamaah Ansharut Tauhid (JAT), an Indonesian extremist group created by Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, the "godfather" of Indonesian jihadists, and another two dozen groups have either expressed support to IS or their leaders have pledged allegiance to its leader, Abu Bakr al Baghdadi alias Caliph Ibrahim. Indonesian, Malaysian and Singaporean authorities have arrested IS ideologues, operatives and supporters. While most Southeast Asians travel to Iraq and Syria from their countries of origin, a few were recruited when they were studying in the Middle East. A significant proportion of Southeast Asian recruits had either served or were serving with threat groups such as JAT, Jemaah Islamiyah and Kumpulan Militan Malaysia (KMM). Having missed the opportunity for "martyrdom" in foreign or their own conflict zones, the Southeast Asian veterans of Afghanistan, Philippines, and Indonesia (Poso and Ambon) seek to travel to Syria and Iraq. The end-of-time prophesy that the greatest of all battles will be fought in Sham (greater Syria or Levant) makes "martyrdom" in Syria the most attractive battlefield. Although not to the extent of Middle Eastern Muslims, a segment of Southeast Asian Muslims believe in the end-of-time prophecy, support the implementing of Islamic law, and are lured by the idea of the Caliphate. The threat groups exploit these sentiments to generate support to recruit fighters and others to travel to Syria and Iraq.

ISIS Influence in Southeast Asia

MALAYSIA
1. BKAW
2. BAJ
3. DIMZIA
4. ADI
5. Darul Islam Sabah

THE PHILIPPINES
1. Abu Sayyaf Group (Isnilon Hapilon faction)
2. Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters
3. Jama'at Ansar al-Khilafa

INDONESIA
1. Ring Banten
2. Mujahideen Indonesia Timur (MIT)
3. Jamaah Tawhid wal Jihad
4. Jamaah Ansharut Tauhid (JAT)
5. Forum Aktivis Syariah Islam (FAKSI)
6. Pendukung dan Pembela Daulah
7. Gerakan Reformasi Islam (GARIS)
8. Asybal Tawhid Indonesia
9. Kongres Umat Islam Bekasi (KUIB)
10. Umat Islam Nusantara (UIN)
11. Ikhwan Muwahid Indunisy Fie Jazirah al-Muluk (Ambon)
12. IS Aceh
13. Ansharul Kilafah Jawa Timur
14. Halawi Makmun Group
15. Khilafatul Muslimin
16. Mujahideen Indonesia Barat (MIB)
17. Laskar Jundullah
18. Gerakan Tawhid Lamongan

LEGEND
● Declared Bay'ah to Abu Bakar al-Baghdadi
● Individuals in this group declared support to ISIS
● Declared support to ISIS

IS has already created a dedicated operational unit of Southeast Asian fighters in Syria-Iraq called Katibah Nusantara lid Daulah Islamiyah (IS Malay archipelago unit), also known as Majmu'ah Al-Arkhabiliy. Created in al Shadadi, Hasaka Province, Syria in August 2014, it launched its first operation, and was first deployed, in Kurdish villages. Although IS captured the villages, many of the Indonesians were killed. In addition to declaring the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region as an IS Province – Khorasan – will IS declare Eastern Indonesia, already a training area for both Indonesians and foreigners, including Uighurs from Xinjiang, as another IS Province in Asia?

BACKGROUND

After the US invasion of Iraq in March 2003, an Al Qaeda-associated group in Iraq, Tawhid Wal Jihad, renamed itself Al Qaeda in Iraq. Al Qaeda in Iraq changed its name to the Islamic State of Iraq and then to the Islamic State of Iraq and Sham (ISIS). With the rise of ISIS in 2013 and pronouncement of the Caliphate in 2014, the Southeast Asian jihadist fraternity fractured.

The long-time JI leader Ustaz Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, who formed JAT, switched from supporting Al Qaeda's al Nusra to ISIS. While in prison, Ba'asyir came under the influence of Aman Abdurrahman, who championed the cause of ISIS and now IS in Southeast Asia. A former student of International Islamic University in Islamabad who previously

attended Ba'asyir's school, Rusydan Abdul Hadi joined ISIS and was killed in fighting in the Caliphate Mountain in Syria in May 2015. Meanwhile Yemen-based Muhammad Ayub, the son of Ustaz Abdurrahim Ayub and nephew of Ustaz Aburrahman Ayub, the long-time co-leaders of JI in Australia, also joined ISIS. After repenting, expressing remorse and rejecting violence, Ustaz Abdurrahman Ayub conducted several meetings countering the ISIS/IS methodology and ideology. This included the release of two books against Al Qaeda and ISIS. Similarly, after Abu Bakar Ba'asyir expressed support for ISIS, his son Ustaz Abdul Rohim broke off from JAT and formed his own group – Jamaah Ansharusy Syariah (JAS).

The infighting between al Nusra and IS has spread to the region, affecting cooperation between Southeast Asian terrorist and extremist groups. It has divided families and friends, mosques and Islamic boarding schools, and publishing houses and websites. The Southeast Asian landscape is shifting from an Al Qaeda-centric network to an Al Qaeda-IS hybrid. Southeast Asians travelled to Syria to join the Al Qaeda-associate Jabatal Nusra starting 2012 but they have joined ISIS/IS in Iraq and Syria starting 2013. The directing figures who indoctrinated, motivated and facilitated a pro-ISIS environment in Southeast Asia are Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, Aman Abdurahman, Iwan Dharmawan alias Rois (on death row), Siswanto, Amin Mude, Pak Huda and Ustaz Dani. Called the Takfiri Group, both Ba'asyir and Aman Abdurahman provided leadership and strategic guidance from inside prison. Aman Abdurahman translated to bahasa the works of Abu Mohammed al Maqdisi, the mentor of Abu Musab al Zarqawi, the founder father of ISIS and IS materials. Abu Musab and his long-time mentor Abu Mohammed are jihad icons among the Indonesian jihadist fraternity. Serving a nine-year sentence since 2010 for his role in supporting a terrorist training camp in Aceh, Aman Abdurahman provided mentorship to multiple platforms promoting ISIS and IS.

ISIS/IS Indonesia Genesis

With the outbreak of the Syrian conflict on the eve of the Arab Spring, the global call to overthrow the Syrian regime galvanized Muslims worldwide. Southeast Asians join three principal Iraqi and Syrian threat groups – Jabhat al Nusra, IS, and Ajnad al Sham. In the initial wave, the brutality of the Assad regime galvanized and generated support throughout Southeast Asia, including from terrorist and extremist groups. Fundraising campaigns were conducted by Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (Council of Indonesian Mujahidin), JAT, JI. JI humanitarian wing Hilal Ahmar Society dispatched a dozen batches to Syria starting in late 2012. Both online and offline HASI raised funds for the Syria project and provided medical support, clothing, and food. Among the JI leaders who led the effort in Indonesia was Abu Rusydan, the JI chief, and a few HASI delegations to Syria were led by Bambang Sukirno. By moving closer to the fighting area, JI established contact with Jabhat al Nusra, the Al Qaeda-associated group in

Syria. In addition to HASI, Peduli Muslim (Muslim Care) and Misi Medis Suriah, both Indonesian Salafi relief organizations, dispatched teams to Syria.

The most prominent ISIS platform, Forum Aktivis Shariat Islam (FAKSI), drew activists and supporters from a wide range of groups. To generate support for ISIS, FAKSI, led by Muhammad Fachry and Bahrum Syah, and Forum Pendukung Daulah Islamiyah (FKDI), led by Dr. Amir Mahmud, held a series of public meetings. Even before the formation of a Caliphate in the Middle East, several hundred Indonesians pledged their oaths of allegiance to ISIS. In February 2014, FAKSI organized meetings in Tangerang and Bekasi and in March in Bima, Sumbawa and Jakarta, where Indonesians gathered to support ISIS. Indonesians in Syria invited and facilitated the travel of friends and family. On 26 May 2014, FAKSI directing figure Bahrum Syah left for Syria to join Salim Mubarok alias Abu Jandal al Yemeni, another FAKSI activist serving with ISIS in Syria. In support of the Caliphate, Muhammad Romly, a student of Salim Mubarokformed Ansharul Khilafah Jawa Timur (East Java Partisans of the Caliphate), pledged allegiance to Abu Bakr al Baghdadi on 20 July 2014. On 6 July 2014 for instance, the group managed to gather about 600 people at a ceremony in the Islamic State University (UIN Syarif Hidayatullah) of CiputatJakarta to pledge allegiance to IS. Carefully choreographed, FAKSI's seventh multaqad da'awi (talk show) was titled "Welcoming the New Civilisation of Caliphate 'Ala Minhajin Nubuwwah" (like the earliest Islamic caliphate of Prophet Muhammad's companions).

On 15 July 2014, Dr. Amir Mahmud, an Afghan veteran, declared the establishment of Forum Pendukung Daulah Islamiyah (FPDI/Forum of Supporters of Islamic State) at Baitul Makmur Mosque in Solo. At least more than 500 men attended the event. Similar to the event at Syahida Inn in Ciputat, in this event, the supporters of ISIS also declared ba'iat to Al Baghdadi at Baitul Makmur Mosque in Solo, the centre of Islamic radicalism in Indonesia. While Mahmud in Solo identifies himself as ISIS Indonesia spokesman, Abu Jundullah claims he is ISIS Aceh's spokesman. Joining ISIS was Mahmud's son, Rusydan Abdul Hadi, who was studying in Pakistan. To Mahmud, whose son was killed while fighting in Syria, he is a martyr. To Mahmud, the son in Syria continued the fight he started in Afghanistan.

In Malaysia, Revolusi Islam and Jemmah ISIS Malaysia generated support for ISIS, Kumpulan Militan Malaysia (Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia) for Ajnad al Sham, and Jemaah Islamiyah for Jabhat al Nusra. In addition to groupings of prisoners in jail and in penitentiaries in the Philippines, the Isnilon Hapilon faction of Abu Sayyaf Group and Bangsamoro Freedom Fighters pledged allegiance to IS. There are no cases of Filipinos in Iraq and Syria except unverified reporting by the Syrian government of two Filipino fighters killed. The Saudi government announced the arrest of a Filipino while he was trying to leave the Kingdom to fight in Syria. While two Singaporeans have left for Syria, another two, both teenagers, have been arrested. Willing to mount attacks in Singapore, they were arrested in the interest of public safety.

Fighters' Destiny

Most Southeast Asians travelled by themselves in 2012 and 2013 but increasingly they are accompanied by their wives and even children. Isfandi Zamzam from Indonesia was accompanied by his two daughters and son. Agus Priyanto from Indonesia was accompanied by his wife and three sons. Of the dozen Indonesians who returned from Syria and Iraq, many disillusioned, two were arrested and charged for their past involvement in terrorism. Through Indonesian cooperation with Turkey, the gateway to Syria and Iraq, a few Indonesians were arrested, including one who was deported. Those returnees have provided significant information of Southeast Asians in Syria and Iraq. The returnees currently held by Indonesia are:

1. Muhammed Aries Rahardjo alias Afief Abdul Majid was arrested in Bekasi on 9 August 2014. Also known as Afif alias Apip, he went to Syria and joined forces with ISIS from 15 December 2013 to 15 January 2014. He was arrested for violating Act No. 15 of 2013 under the Eradication of Terrorism Act. The prosecutors allege he funded the terrorist training in Mountain Jalin Jantho, Aceh in 2010.

2. Dwi Gunawan alias Danang alias Wijayasiri alias Wirantowas arrested on 15 May 2014 in Semarang, Central Java for allegedly violating Act No. 15 of 2013 on the Eradication of Terrorism Acts for the act of owning weapons. Danang went to Syria around March-April 2013 and joined forces with the Sunni group led by Abu Muhammad, for one month in Aleppo city, Syria.

3. Muhammad Saifudin Umar alias Abu Fida travelled to Turkey with the intention of fighting for ISIS in Syria. Also known as Fud alias Sid alias Muhammad alias Sahron, Abu Fida entered Turkey on 4 August 2014 but was detected and deported by the Turkish immigration officers. Abu Fida arrived in Indonesia on 6 August 2014 and was arrested on 14 August 2014 in Surabaya, West Java. He was arrested for violating Act No. 15 of 2013 under the Eradication of Terrorism Act. The prosecutors allege he was hiding two of National Police's Most Wanted People (DPO), namely Al Qaeda leader of the Malay Archipelago, Nordin M Top, and Southeast Asia's top bomb maker, Dr. Azahari Hussein.

Of around 43 Indonesian citizens who have been killed in the Syria-Iraq conflict, those identified include:

1. Faruk conducted a suicide attack in Syria on 13 March 2014.

2. Wildan Mukhallad Bin Lasmin alias Abu Bakar al Muhajir from Lamongan conducted a suicide attack in Iraq in February 2014. A student at Azhar University in Egypt, he joined Katibah al Muhajirin but after it merged with ISIS, served with ISIS.

3. Abdul Rauf bin Jahruddin alias Muhammad Abdul Rauf alias Syam allegedly conducted a suicide attack in Syria. Released from prison in August 2011, Syam was sentenced to 16 years' imprisonment for his involvement in the Bali bombing.

4. Reza Fardi alias Abu Muhammad al Indunisi was killed in Aleppo, Syria on 23 November 2013. He was a graduate and a teacher of Pondok Pesantren al Mukmin in Ngruki, the school that produced several terrorists. He also studied at al Imam University in Sana in Yemen but was arrested for overstaying his visa. He joined Suquor al Izz Brigade.

5. Hanzalah al Indunisi conducted a vehicle-borne suicide attack on a military base outside Tikrit city, north of Baghdad, Iraq, on 11 October 2014.

Malaysia arrested nearly 100 IS leaders, operatives and supporters including women. Among the three dozen Malaysians in Syria and Iraq identified was a 26-year-old woman doctor, Dr. Shams, who married a non-Malaysian, possibly a Moroccan ISIS fighter. Malaysians killed in Syria and Iraq include:

1. Ahmad Tarmimi Malike, 26 years old, was killed in a suicide bombing in Iraq. The factory worker killed more than 20 elite Iraqi soldiers at their base in al-Anbar in May 2014.

2. Abu Faz, in his 20s, was killed in a suicide attack in Iraq in May 2014.

3. Zainal Harith alias Abu Turob alias Abu Talhah, 52 years old, was killed in an operation in Syria in August 2014.

4. Fadhlan Shahidi alias Abu Muhajir, 21 years old, was killed in an operation in Syria on 9 September 2014. Known as the dimpled fighter, he had a popular following.

5. Lotfi Ariffin alias Abu Musab, 46 years old, who was injured in an attack, died after battling post-operation injuries in Syria on 14 September 2014. He attracted many Malaysians to travel to Syria and Iraq.

6. Muhammad Afiq Heusen Rahizat alias Abu Dubais, 25 years old, was killed in an operation in Syria on 1 October 2014.

7. Abu Zakaria was killed in a suicide operation against Assad's forces on 8/9 November 2014.

ISIS Footprint Expands

The focus of the international security and intelligence services has been on JI but its successor, JAT, built a bridge to Syria and Iraq. Today, a few new groups are also linking up with IS. With its presence in the conflict zones of Poso, Palu and Bima,

Mujahidin of Eastern Indonesia (MIT) is working with IS. Of the three groupings, the Bima group had already sent six fighters to Syria and Poso group members are planning to travel. It is led by Santoso, who, in honour of the founding father of ISIS, Abu Musab al Zarqawi, has adopted the name Abu Musab al Zarqawi al Indonesi. MIT has a high potential to commit terrorist acts and accept foreign members of the international terrorist network to join them to commit terrorist acts in Indonesia. Its most recent recruits include Uighurs from Xingjiang in Western China. The MIT members who joined forces with IS are recruiting others to join them. According to General Tito Karnavian, the former Commander of Detachment 88, "[o]ne of the efforts that this group has made in order to deceive the authorities was to purchase return flight tickets and this should be kept in the look-out. This group also has sufficient funds, besides careful planning to go to Syria." A particular recruit travelling with his family to Syria from Indonesia would purchase a return flight ticket from Singapore to Jakarta but when in Singapore would then purchase a flight ticket to Turkey, the gateway to Syria. Among the MIB members in Syria are Reza Fahlevy and his wife Retino. While one member was planning to sell his land to travel to Syria, another member was planning to take his family. Having established a beachhead in Syria, more wives and children are planning to travel. To hide their true identities, they adopted aliases. For example, Abu Muhammad Al-Indonesi is from FAKSI and his real name is Bahrum Syah; he is a student of Aman Abdurahman's and is currently in Syria. Working with MIT and MIB, Bahrum Syah created Katibah Nusantara to support the IS.

STRATEGY IS TO BUILD ISLAMIC POLITIES AND UNITE THEM WITH THE CALIPHATE

With the dismantling of Mujahidin of Western Indonesia (MIB), its remnants cooperated with MIT especially its Bima group. An Institute for Policy Analysis for Conflict report, titled "Indonesians and the Syrian conflict", released in January 2014, reported that MIB members have robbed a bank in Tangerang on December 12, 2013 to finance their travel to Syria. While a false passport would cost USD833, the cost of the flight would be double the amount. The six members were killed in January 2014 but investigations revealed that MIB had already dispatched a member and created a bridgehead for chain migration. With transiting through Southeast Asia becoming a challenge, MIB remnants working with MIT developed an access route to Syria-Iraq via Hong Kong.

In addition to MIT and MIB, the Kalimantan group and Tasikmalaya group are sending their recruits to Syria. The terrorist network in Kalimantan established links to Syria and Iraq. Ustaz Syahir blessed his son Fikrul to travel to Syria-Iraq on 9 September 2014. Aman Abdurahman emerged as the role model for the Tasikmalaya group coordinated by Ustaz Dani and Amin Mude. Members of this group have created a dedicated committee to support travel to Syria-Iraq. The committee oversaw a

selection process and then three months of training before dispatching recruits. They also organized passports, travel and funding. After receiving the blessings of Aman Abdurrahman, a few Poso alumni travelled to Syria and Iraq.

STATE RESPONSE

With the spread of ISIS ideology in Southeast Asia, the threat landscape is changing dramatically. Southeast Asian governments are seeking to criminalize advocacy, support and participation in fighting in conflict zones. The response of Singapore and Malaysia to the threat has been firm and no group has openly held meetings in support of IS. The Internal Security Act of Singapore acts as a deterrence. With the repeal of the ISA in Malaysia, the authorities are challenged to collect sufficient evidence before arresting and charging those seeking to travel to and support the fight in Syria and Iraq. However, the Malaysian Special Branch counter-terrorism division led by Dato Ayob Khan bin Mydin Pitchay is still a formidable force in detecting and disrupting terrorist support and operational activity. This was aptly demonstrated when 19 suspects were arrested from April to June 2014 for formulating plans to bomb pubs, discos and a Malaysian brewery of Danish beer producer Carlsberg. IS Malaysia leader Murad Halimudin alias Murad Sudin, an ex-KMM leader, was arrested in Kedah by Malaysian authorities acting on information from MSB. Murad built an IS network in Kedah, Perak and Kuala Lumpur. His network planned to kidnap government officers, including the Prime Minister, Defence Minister and Home Minster of Malaysia, and to demand the release of IS detainees in Malaysian custody under SOSMA. A secondary set of targets included an attack on a military base with the support of two Malaysian military personnel. The presence of these personnel in the cell enabled this cell to develop intelligence and attack the base specially for acquiring weapons. Other attacks disrupted were against government buildings in Putrajaya, such as the Police HQ and the public prosecutors' office, and entertainment places.

Despite arrests in Indonesia, open activity in support of IS from publications to meetings still continues. The Indonesian government announced that IS is a terrorist group, but a tiny segment of Indonesians continue to support the Islamic Caliphate openly. Both Indonesian intelligence and law enforcement authorities have disrupted several meetings in support of IS. Unlike the meetings in Ciputat and Solo that generated support for IS, the authorities disrupted the follow-on meetings in Malang, Surabaya, and Bekasi. Nonetheless, IS supporters are determined. More than five IS-related seminars were conducted in Jakarta, Bekasi, and Central Java in the last quarter of 2014 and first quarter of 2015 despite the fact that the government officially banned IS in August 2014. Online propaganda by IS supporters has also not abated despite the arrest of M. Fachry, the chief editor and pioneer of the Indonesian pro-IS mouthpiece website Al-Mustaqbal.net.

Conclusion

The concern of Southeast Asian governments is that the developments in Iraq and Syria are creating a momentum for attacks. Terrorist group members who are unable to travel to Syria-Iraq are encouraged to plan and prepare attacks against coalition partners. Furthermore, the IS attacks and hatred is disrupting the harmony that has prevailed between the Shia and Sunni communities in the region. Even a number of Islamic mass organisation figures who joined the Coalition of Indonesia Islamic Mass Organisation (KOIIN), comprising elements of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Muhammadiyah, MIUMI (Council of Indonesian Ulema Young Intellectual/Majelis Intelektual Ulama Muda Indonesia) and MUI (Council of Indonesia Ulema), held a press conference titled "Saving Indonesia from ISIS" on 6 August 2014. During the press conference, Ali Musthofa Ya'kub, the Grand Imam of Istiqlal Mosque, who was also an MUI chairman, firmly stated that ISIS is against Islam. The rejection against ISIS did not stop here. Waves of protests and rejection against ISIS were also reflected by banners that were put on the side of streets. The banners were also seen in lanes not far from Campus II of UIN Syarif. Despite attempts by the large Muslim organizations to counter IS, the successes have been limited.

The way forward for governments is to shift from cooperation to collaboration. First, governments need to build partnerships with religious, educational and community organizations to raise public awareness about IS. Without the state building partnerships with civil society organizations and the business community, the threat is likely to spread even more. For example, there should be cooperation between law enforcement and the service providers to dismantle the IS platforms that radicalize youth. Second, government agencies need to enhance national, regional and international cooperation. As Asian recruits transit between countries before reaching their destination of Iraq and Syria, if there is cooperation between national security and law enforcement agencies, they can be prevented from reaching their destination. IS French operative Mehdi Nemmouche, who attacked the Jewish Museum of Belgium and killed four persons on 24 May 2014, visited Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore before entering Europe through Germany. He had travelled to and spent a year in Syria. As he had travelled to Syria through Turkey, by travelling to Southeast Asia, he attempted to deceive the authorities that he was a tourist. A criminal who was radicalized and recruited in prison, Nemmouche, a 29-year-old French national of Algerian origin, was arrested at Marseille and extradited to Belgium. He recorded a video bearing the IS flag. Had the French shared intelligence with their Asian counterparts, the attack may have been prevented. International and regional security and intelligence cooperation is today paramount for containing and controlling the threat.

IS should be fought at the global, regional and local level. To fight and dismantle IS, a global threat, governments need to develop a full-spectrum response, ranging from kinetic and lethal operations in IS provinces to community-engagement capabilities

in countries feeding recruits. Furthermore, governments working with their partners should build capabilities to both prevent upstream radicalization through community engagement and to respond to downstream radicalization through rehabilitation. Like the fight against Al Qaeda that lasted a decade, the fight against IS is likely to continue in the foreseeable future.

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Foreign Fighters and Returning Jihadis – The Biggest Terrorist Threat to Security in Europe?

Kristina Eichhorst

On April 30, German security authorities cancelled a bicycle race scheduled for the next day out of fears of a terrorist attack. Earlier that day police had detained a married couple suspected of being behind the plot. While searching the suspects' apartment, police found a pipe bomb, explosives, a rifle and ammunition. The suspects had been put under police surveillance several weeks prior to the arrest, after buying unusually large quantities of chemicals suitable for producing explosives. Since one of the suspects had been observed surveying an area near the path of the racing event, authorities decided to act in order to avoid endangering participants and spectators.

The arrest was just the latest in a series of incidents where German security services succeeded in preventing similar assaults. Germany had not been this lucky in 2011, when at Frankfurt airport a single terrorist killed two US soldiers and severely wounded two others. This strike, however, remains the only terrorist attack with a radical Islamist background on German soil so far.[1] Europe as a whole has been less fortunate lately: The devastating Paris onslaught on the French magazine Charlie Hebdo and a Jewish supermarket in January 2015 with 17 deaths sent shock waves through the whole of Europe. This incident had been preceded by a similar-styled raid on a Jewish museum in Brussels in April 2014, killing four. In February 2015, it was followed by yet another attack in Copenhagen that left two people dead and six wounded. Each of these incidents (and others that were successfully prevented) was inspired by radical Islamist ideology. The perpetrators showed links to ISIL and/or Al Qaeda, either by being directly connected to the terror networks or having them as a source of inspiration. In response to these events, security services throughout the European Union have since been on high alert expecting further attacks to come.

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[1] There have been, however, several plans for terrorist attacks that were successfully prevented by German police in close cooperation with American and other international security services. The potentially most devastating plan was the intention by the so-called "Sauerland Group" to detonate a medium-sized explosive in a department store, in coordination with a second, larger bomb placed in a truck to be detonated when people fled the site of the first detonation.

Foreign Fighters and Returning Jihadis – The Biggest Terrorist Threat to Security in Europe?

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Foreign Fighters and Returning Jihadis as a Threat to Europe's Security

One of the main concerns in this regard is the high number of European citizens going to Syria and Iraq. From 2011, when Syria's civil war started, to early 2015 more than 4,000 individuals travelled to the region.[2] Unsurprisingly, the biggest numbers come from the largest European countries – Germany, France and Britain. Yet, in relation to the size of their populations, Belgium, Denmark and Sweden do by far have the biggest contingents of foreign fighters. Most of the Western "jihadi tourists" are male, in their mid-20s and often have a migration background. There are, however, significant exceptions to the rule: About 10% of the travellers are female and on average three years younger than their male counterparts. Moreover, around 20% of the persons concerned are converts of German origin who do not possess any migration background.

Security services have for a long time been issuing warnings regarding the potential threat posed by foreign fighters and returning jihadis. Never before has Europe seen so many of its citizens travel to a conflict zone with the intent to join the jihad. However, it remains unclear whether this group of people poses the biggest terrorist threat to security in Europe.

First of all, not every individual who leaves for Syria has the intent to join the jihad. Some of them plausibly want to become engaged in humanitarian aid. Others aim to fight the regime of Bashar al-Assad, without any jihadist ideology in mind. Moreover, some – mostly women – travel to Syria to marry a jihadi. Furthermore, some of those who do indeed have the intent to fight end up fulfilling daily life duties such as cleaning the bathrooms or guarding prisoners. Hence, these individuals do not amass fighting experiences at all. Second, not everyone who travels to the region and joins the jihad returns. An estimated five to ten percent die while fighting on the ground or while conducting suicide attacks. Others choose to just stay in the caliphate, living the religious life they longed for when leaving their home countries. Last, but not least, a significant number of foreign fighters travel from Syria and Iraq to other war-torn areas in order to contribute to the global jihad in places like Yemen or Libya.

Those who do return have been summed up as the "three Ds" (Peter Neumann): the disillusioned, the (emotionally) disturbed and the dangerous individuals. The first category consists of those who come back from Syria disappointed by what they experienced. Many returning jihadis relate accounts of ennui and senselessness and daily routines filled with boredom. These disillusioned returnees turn away from jihadist

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[2] Estimated numbers do vary from source to source, though not significantly. The following numbers stem from the data set of the International Centre for the Study of Radicalization (ICSR) at King's College, London. See Peter R. Neumann, "Foreign Fighter total in Syria/Iraq exceeds 20,000; surpasses Afghanistan conflict in the 1980s", 26 January 2015, [http://icsr.info/2015/01/foreign-fighter-total-syriairaq-now-exceeds-20000-surpasses-afghanistan-conflict-1980s/].

beliefs and try to revive the life they left behind. Others may be traumatized by what they underwent. They usually have no intent to commit any sort of terrorist attack. Emotionally disturbed and potentially brutalized, they may, however, present a certain risk to the public (e.g., by running amok, although no proven example is known so far). Last, but not least, are the ones who do indeed return with the clear motivation to conduct a terrorist attack. Equally brutalized, further ideologicalized, determined and motivated, they do indeed pose a significant threat. Most likely, they are experienced in the use of weapons, skilled in the conduct of war and know how to carry out complex and coordinated operations. The time they spent on the ground will have helped them to become part of a wider network of support and cooperation that will be of advantage to them when they return. The impact of potential attacks, therefore, could be devastating. Moreover, having seen and committed atrocities on a large scale they are likely to show a ruthlessness and determination that hitherto has been unknown to ordinary police personnel in Europe. This implies that police personnel should be prepared to encounter attackers who – at least in their fighting capacity and experience – resemble well-trained soldiers.

Studies show that approximately one out of nine returning Jihadis do indeed plan and/or carry out terrorist attacks.[3] With about 300 persons who have returned from Syria and Iraq so far, Germany thus faces quite an alarming number of potential terrorists. In comparable respect the same holds true for the rest of Europe. Since it is immensely difficult to distinguish between the „three Ds" and to know which returnee is profoundly disillusioned and which might still be dangerous, these numbers present a huge challenge to the authorities. Each individual thus has to be assessed and observed for probably quite a while until properly classified according to the above-mentioned categories. If necessary, individuals have to be put under 24/7 surveillance. For a single suspect, this requires 20 to 30 operatives of the already understaffed security apparatus. Taking into account the face that numbers are still rising with no end in sight, it becomes obvious that foreign fighters and returning jihadis pose a huge threat to security in Europe.

Lone Jihad - the Bigger Threat?

Still, it remains unclear whether foreign fighters and returning jihadis do indeed pose the biggest threat to security in Europe. Analyses of terrorist incidents (prevented as well as not prevented) show that for now, another kind of terrorist actor has proved to be the more common one: individuals or small groups who simply feel inspired by and connected to terrorist Islamist groups. These people have never travelled to the region and they often do not have any links to ISIL or Al Qaeda at all (although they

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[3] See Thomas Hegghammer, "Should I Stay or Should I Go? Explaining Variation in Western Jihadists' Choice between Domestic and Foreign Fighting", in *American Political Science Review*, February 2013.

are probably in loose contact with some sort of extremist network). They neither receive any sort of training nor are they in possession of overly sophisticated weapons. The course of action is not excessively complex and there is no multifaceted coordination with other actors involved. They do, however, have the intent and the capacity to conduct small-scale attacks. The physical impact of these attacks may be limited in comparison to coordinated and large-scale ones but they do have the ability to kill a significant number of people and, by doing so, to spread fear and cause panic.

A classic example of this kind of terrorist incident was the assault in Copenhagen in February 2015: The perpetrator did not have a known affiliation with an Islamist group. Instead he had a criminal background and a strong association with a criminal gang. While in jail he did, however, pass through a process of Islamist radicalization and apparently swore fealty to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. He did not have any experience in conflict zones but he knew how to handle a weapon. As has been the case in similar incidents, he chose a symbolic target – a synagogue and a gathering that promoted free speech. The assaulter initiated and conducted the strike on his own, used an easy-to-acquire weapon (a stolen assault rifle) and conducted a "simple", non-sophisticated attack.

Decentralized Global Islamist Resistance

In this he met demands not only by ISIL but also by Al Qaeda, whose ideologues both lately issued calls for "decentralized global Islamic resistance".[4] By encouraging so-called "lone wolf" or "lone jihad" attacks, both networks explicitly recommend assaults that are simple in terms of design, tactics and applied weapons. Perpetrators should be organized in small, non-central cells and should act completely separate from any other network. Hence, commitment to the Islamist ideology rather than recognized membership of any specific group has been equally recommended.

This change of strategy can be seen as a response to international efforts to fight global terrorism. In recent years, coordinated counter-terrorism policies have profoundly diminished the capabilities of radical Islamist groups to conduct large-scale attacks in the West. However, these groups have adapted to the new challenges. With the proclaimed "lone jihad" strategy they circumvent many of the restraints created by the security authorities:

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[4] Al-Qaeda issued the "Call for Global Islamic Resistance" (found at: https://archive.org/details/TheGlobalIslamicResistanceCall), while ISIS published the e-book *How to survive in the West: A Mujahid Guide*. See Joanna Paraszczuk, "Tracking Islamic State. How IS uses invisible ink, false mustaches to disguise a more sinister message", in Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, http://www.rferl.org/content/islamic-state-invisible-ink-disguises-false-mustaches/27016443.html, 18 May 2015. Strategic as well as tactical recommendations, however, are mainly identical.

First of all, by explicitly encouraging simple attacks they send the clear message that everyone is capable of becoming a terrorist. He or she does not have to be a member of a particular group and does not have to possess any specific qualifications or weapons. Hence, by making explicit that there is no excuse for inaction they significantly lower the bar for conducting an act of terrorism in the first place and encourage an "all-and-sundry approach". They thereby not only widen the array of followers and potential perpetrators, they also make it impossible for the police to define the prototype of a terrorist actor and to limit the range of "usual suspects". Without a track record of travelling to the region or any Islamist "credentials" at all, chances are high that lone actors never appear on any intelligence names list and are not known to the authorities unless they strike. Second, simple attacks do not need a lot of cooperation and coordination. Lead time for planning can be quite limited and attacks might happen at short notice or even spontaneously. A minimum of communication (or no communication at all), furthermore, limits the chances that it might be intercepted by intelligence authorities. Hence, "lone jihad" attacks are much harder to detect. The chances of preventing them are thus tremendously limited. While the physical damage of these attacks may be limited as well, the political and psychological effect cannot be overestimated.

Potential Cross-Over Phenomenon

Apart from the applied "lone jihad" strategy, the Copenhagen attacks are also emblematic for a recent cross-over phenomenon: the merging of criminals and Islamist terrorists. Coming from a criminal background and turning into a radical Islamist while in jail, the Copenhagen perpetrator combined the two most important characteristics of a potential Islamist terrorist – capacity and motivation. Capacity comprises the psychological predetermination to be ready to attack as well as the physical experience of how to use a weapon. Both are likely to be present in someone who already has a track record of criminal violent offences. Motivation can be given by a radical and brutal ideology that also gives fanatic determination. Combined in a given individual, a very unpleasant type of offender enters the scene. While known to authorities as a criminal delinquent, he may not raise suspicion as a possible terrorist actor. In light of these considerations, the latest reports about massive radicalization waves taking place in jails throughout Europe are alarming. It becomes obvious that this cross-over phenomenon is a trend to come that somehow has to be addressed.

Large-Scale Terrorist Threat

This might lead to the conclusion that the "lone cross-over actor" can be singled out as the main terrorist threat currently. However, security officials warn against making this assumption and stress that, in fact, any kind of terrorist attack might be likely. This also applies to sophisticated large-scale terrorist threats. As has been said before, authorities

have successfully taken significant steps to diminish the capabilities of Al Qaeda and the like to strike in the West in a 9/11-styled attack. Yet, this menace has not gone away entirely.

An exact 9/11-scenario might be unlikely due to the massive logistical preparations required and the precautions security authorities have taken against this very specific threat. However, similar scenarios that require less logistical coordination but nonetheless have a spectacular character are still thinkable. The attacks in Mumbai are often cited as a possible blueprint in this regard: Synchronized and simultaneous strikes by a number of small groups (probably also involving foreign fighters) on highly symbolic institutions and/or weak targets, possibly over a certain time span. The latter would ensure that live media coverage could be guaranteed – something that seems to be as important as ever (or even more so, given Al Qaeda's and even more so ISIL's media affinity).

Several aspects of recent developments increase the likelihood of such a scenario:

First, as worrisome as the small-scale attacks of Copenhagen and Brussels have been, they bear the risk of attrition. The public very quickly gets used to a certain kind of news. This is also demonstrated by the dwindling media attention concerning ISIL's beheading videos. Hence, in order to cause intense anxiety and to get broad and enduring media coverage, future attacks would have to offer new aspects – be it a new setting and/or a larger scale of devastation. Sophisticated large-scale attacks fulfil both criteria.

Second, given the successful prevention of a whole range of terrorist attacks on German soil, Germany in particular seems to be a high-profile target. This is especially so since the German public did not seem to accord much attention to the single "successful" strike at Frankfurt airport in 2011. Since "only" two persons were killed, both of whom were neither Germans nor civilians, the public seemed to be disturbingly untouched by the event, which apparently is not entrenched in the collective memory of Germany's society. This happy-go-lucky attitude has been reinforced by the prevention of other attacks during the past 14 years. It can only be seen as a provocation to any Islamist group that aims to strike on German soil. Hence, it is very likely that Germany has become the main target for a large-scale attack – the more spectacular, the better.

Last, but not least, the rise to power of ISIL in Syria and Iraq created a keen competition between this newcomer and Al Qaeda. ISIL's intense media presence over the past year led to a phenomenon that has often been described as "pop jihad" with ISIL being the unquestioned superstar. This has been reflected most obviously in the well-articulated intent of most foreign fighters who travelled to Syria and Iraq to join ISIL and not any other group on the ground. Another clear indication is the massive and widespread display of ISIL symbols in the Middle East and in Europe as well as on the Internet. While ISIL's black flag is well-known to the public at large, most of them will not know what Al Qaeda's flag looks like. Hence, ISIL has not only been successful

in portraying itself as the main adversary to Bashar al-Assad and the chief defender of Sunnis in Syria and Iraq but has also started to raise its claim to global radical Islamist leadership. The latest proof of this aspiration has been ISIL's launch of a radio station that broadcasts in four languages (Arabic, French, Kurdish and English) on ISIL news. By claiming global leadership, ISIL puts immense pressure on Al Qaeda to reclaim its role as the main representative of the global jihad. As a consequence, both organisations have a serious interest in winning this battle by gaining attention with spectacular large-scale attacks in the West, proving which one is the more powerful and potentially dangerous one.

Parallelism of Terrorist Threats and its Implications

Hence, the real challenge to Europe's security in general as well as Germany's security in particular seems to be the parallelism of terrorist threats. Each of the threat types described above – the lone (and potentially cross-over) actor, the foreign terrorist fighter/returning jihadi as well as the "big theatre threat" – remains realistic and imminent. A calculation of probability and a ranking of threats according to likelihood seems neither possible nor plausible. Thus, authorities have to be prepared to counter each of these scenarios, probably even simultaneously.

However, as diverse as these types of terrorist threats may appear, they also have some fundamental aspects in common – first and foremost is their ideology and its identification of friends or foes. Focusing on those common denominators can help with the drafting of a strategy for simultaneous counter-terrorism, especially with regard to the provision of security. While open societies at large remain the proclaimed enemies of global jihad, some of their elements have proven to be particularly exposed: Jewish institutions, "offenders of Islam" (e.g., proponents of free speech) as well as security-related authorities (police, security personnel etc.). Hence, for now, they appear to be the most prominent and most vulnerable targets – and therefore most at risk.[5] This in turn implies that extensive safeguards have to be provided to them wherever applicable, irrespective of the specific type of terrorist threat. While this seems to be self-evident on first sight, January's attack on the Jewish supermarket in Paris suggests otherwise. The attack brought up the question of whether soft targets like these – in their hundreds or even thousands – can be protected at all. Hence, a debate on when safeguards are applicable and when they are not is urgently needed. This seems to be especially true given the fact that the better hard targets are protected, the more exposed soft targets become.

These deliberations show that a broad discussion is needed about the imminent question of how far we can and how far we want to go to protect our security. In the

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[5] The attacker in Copenhagen, for example, could have shot and killed casual bystanders who passed by the crime scene. However, he chose not to.

face of a diverse and demanding spectrum of terrorist threats, the issue hints at the age-old challenge of striking a delicate balance between the provision of security and the retention of freedom. The questions may entail the answers that life implies taking risks; that not every risk can be countered; and that sometimes attacks are inescapable. To broadly debate these theses within our open societies is an imminent task for Europe to fulfil if we want to succeed in keeping our freedom. This in fact seems to be the biggest challenge of all.

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Western Jihadists in Syria and Iraq: A Preliminary Overview

Peter R. Neumann

The presence of Western Europeans among the militant extremist groups that are participating in the Syrian/Iraqi conflict – especially Islamic State and Jabhat al Nusra – has been the subject of much attention. Yet media reporting on the subject is often anecdotal and sensationalist. The purpose of this paper is to provide an evidence-based overview of the phenomenon, addressing key questions such as: how many have gone; what messages make them go; what do they do in Syria/Iraq; and – of course – what will happen when they return.

The paper draws on relevant academic literature, credible reporting, and – of course – the in-depth research carried out by researchers at the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation (ICSR),[1] which included the creation of a nearly 700-strong database containing the social media profiles of Western fighters, more than 50 interviews and/or conversations with fighters (typically via private messaging services), and field research in Turkish border towns from where the majority of foreign fighters transfer into Syria.

Needless to say, the paper won't be able to offer more than a snapshot of what is a complex and fast-evolving phenomenon. The policy recommendations – with which the paper will conclude – need to be read with this caveat in mind.

How Many?

Since April 2013, ICSR has regularly published estimates on the numbers of foreign fighters in Sunni extremist organizations in the Syrian (now Syrian/Iraqi) conflict. Our latest figures were released at the Munich Security Conference in February 2015.[2] They

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[1] In addition to the author, ICSR's "Syrian foreign fighters" team consists of Shiraz Maher, Joseph A. Carter, Aaron Y. Zelin, and Melanie Smith.

[2] See Peter R. Neumann, "Number of Western European foreign fighters in Syria/Iraq rises to 4,000", *ICSR Insight*, 27 January 2015; available at http://icsr.info/category/publications/insights/. For a description of the methodology, see Aaron Y. Zelin, "Up to 11,000 foreign fighters in Syria; steep rise among Western Europeans", *ICSR Insight*, 17 December 2013: available at http://icsr.info/2013/12/icsr-insight-11000-foreign-fighters-syria-steep-rise-among-western-europeans/.

show that the number of Western European fighters has risen from 500 in April 2013 to nearly 4,000 – a nine-fold increase in less than two years. The largest European countries – France (1,200), Britain (500-600), and Germany (500-600) – account for more than half of the total. But it is the smaller, especially northern European, countries that seem to be disproportionately affected: Belgium (440), the Netherlands (200-250), Sweden (150-180), Denmark (100-150), and Austria (100-150) have all produced as many – in some cases, more – foreign fighters *per capita* than their larger neighbours. Also represented are Spain (50-100), Italy (80), Finland (50-70), Norway (60), Switzerland (40), and Ireland (26). (Countries with less than 10 fighters were not listed.)

Grasping the scale of mobilization can be difficult. In each of the countries above, the Syrian/Iraqi conflict has produced more foreign fighters than any *single* conflict since the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s. In many countries, especially the smaller ones, it has mobilized more than in all of the other conflicts *combined*. Western Europeans now represent around 20 per cent of the estimated current total of 18,000 fighters from outside Syria and Iraq. What's more, the conflict is well on track to becoming the most significant mobilization of Sunni foreign fighters since the Second World War. According to the Norwegian researcher Thomas Hegghammer, only the struggle against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s has attracted more foreigners – up to 20,000 – albeit over an entire decade.[3]

The Afghanistan analogy is important. It was during the Afghanistan conflict in the 1980s that many of the individuals who went on to form al Qaeda first met, gained military training and came up with the idea of creating a network of fighters that could be deployed wherever "Muslim lands" were occupied or "apostate" dictators needed to be overthrown. From Bosnia and Algeria to Chechnya and the Philippines, the so-called "Arab Afghans" featured in nearly every conflict in the "Muslim world" in the 1990s and 2000s.[4] Even the September 11 attacks in 2001 can be traced to Afghan networks,[5] underlining the longevity of the potential threat: if the analogy is accurate, some of the foreigners that are fighting in Syria and Iraq today will be of concern for a generation to come.

What Messages Make Them Go?

Western Europeans have been drawn into the conflict for different reasons. For younger men in particular, the notion of adventure clearly seems to be important. The conflict offers a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to "hang out with the brothers", fight for a cause, and – possibly – become a hero. In 2013, many Western fighters in Syria were

[3] Thomas Hegghammer, "The Rise of Muslim Foreign Fighters: Islam and the Globalization of Jihad", *International Security*, 35(3) (2010), p. 61.

[4] See, for example, Mustafa Hamid and Leah Farrall, *The Arabs at War in Afghanistan* (London: Hurst, 2015).

[5] See Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower: Al Qaeda and the Road to 9/11* (London: Penguin, 2007).

posting pictures and videos that articulated the notion of a "5 star jihad". They showed young European men standing on the battlefield, RPGs over their shoulders, maiming and killing the enemy, but also sitting next to swimming pools, playing snooker in abandoned villas, and eating chocolate bars and potato chips. The message was simple: come and join us, this will be the greatest adventure of your life. Indeed, the "5 star jihad" theme was so successful that some groups had to make statements, explaining what the struggle was all about and telling recruits that they weren't welcome unless they took their faith seriously.

Among the most compelling narratives, especially in the first two years of the conflict, was the idea of "fighting against an existential threat", which has been an important mobilizing theme for foreign fighters across cultures and ages.[6] Countless videos and speeches were articulating the idea of a Shiite conspiracy – led by Syrian president Bashar al Assad, and supported by the governments of Iran and Iraq as well as the Lebanese Hezbollah – intent on eliminating the Sunni people of Syria. Pictures showing Sunni civilians being killed, tortured and raped resonated strongly with many of the European fighters that we have monitored through social networks. They not only created a sense of anger – both at Assad for carrying out these crimes, and the West for being silent and passive – but also one of urgency. If calling oneself Muslim had any meaning, so the argument went, this was the moment to show it. Fighting in Syria was seen as legitimate and defensive, and had nothing to do with terrorism. Nor, in fact, was it initially perceived as anti-Western, since the United States and European countries had declared their opposition to Assad as well.

Gradually, though, the (more or less defensive) notion of saving one's "brothers and sisters" from being exterminated has made way for a more offensive idea, that of (re-)creating a Caliphate. Ever since extremist groups started holding territories in the north and east of Syria and created their own systems of governance, the prospect of migrating to, building, and living in a perfect "Islamic State" has fired the imagination of many Western recruits. Even before the "Islamic State" declared its caliphate, many Europeans who had moved to Syria burned their (Western) passports, making it clear that they had no intention of returning to their home countries. The quick military victories during the summer of 2014 seemed to confirm the sense of destiny and momentum among potential recruits, demonstrating that they were involved in a historical mission – the re-building of the Caliphate – that "people in a thousand years" would still be talking about. It became an attractive vision both for ideologically hardened extremists and those who were looking to fill their lives with meaning and significance.[7]

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[6] David Malet, *Foreign Fighters: Transnational Identity in Civil Conflicts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), Chapter 1.

[7] See A. W. Kruglanski and Edward Orehek, "The Role of the Quest for Personal Significance in Motivating Terrorism", in J. Forgas, A.W. Kruglanski and K. Williams (eds.), *The Psychology of Social Conflict and Aggression* (New York: Psychology Press, 2011), pp. 153-66.

Finally, since the beginning of coalition airstrikes in August 2014, we have seen evidence of the traditional "West versus Islam" rhetoric, which had been difficult to apply to a conflict in which Western powers were trying hard not to become involved. Going to Syria and Iraq has, yet again, become a means of fighting America which, they argue, is hoping to "occupy and colonize" Muslim lands.

What Do They Do in Syria?

Having decided to become "migrants", virtually all potential fighters make their way to Turkey from where they transfer into Syria. Before joining the group, they typically have to stay in safe houses on either side of the border and subject themselves to various checks and tests. The purpose is to find out whether recruits' motivations are sincere and to what extent they can be useful to the group. Over the course of the conflict, the groups have become more rigorous, and we know of cases where recruits had to "apply" to several groups before eventually being able to join.

Although the vast majority of (male) recruits have ambitions to become fighters, not every foreigner is used in combat. This is particularly true for Westerners and Europeans, of whom only a small minority have any military training or experience, which – in any case – tends to pale in comparison to the Chechens, Libyans, or Iraqis who have fought in insurgencies, gaining reputations for being physically fit and battle-hardened. Europeans often do jobs based on their civilian skills and training. If someone used to work as a car mechanic, he will be used in a similar capacity by the "Islamic State", fixing technicals or teaching people how to operate military equipment. If he is good with computers or writing, he may join the social media "department", helping to produce videos and websites aimed at intimidating Western audiences and promoting the group's message back home.

Where Europeans are used in the military proper, it is often for low-level military duties that require little skills and come with no great responsibilities. They receive one or two weeks of military training and are then deployed on guard duty, standing at fixed positions for hours on end, often with specific instructions not to fire their weapons but alert other, presumably more experienced, operators should threats arise. For many Western fighters, this is a source of frustration. They often arrive in Syria with high expectations, thinking they will be involved in combat and take part in daring raids and adventures. The mundane realities of (low level) military service have caused some to feel undervalued and become disillusioned. In a number of cases, people have volunteered to act as couriers, going back to their European home countries to raise money and buy essential equipment.[8]

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[8] As illustrated in Der Generalbundesanwalt v. Ismail Issa, Mohammed Ayubi, and Ezzedinne Issa, "Anklageschrift", 23 May 2014.

The lack of fighting and language skills – many Europeans do not speak Arabic – limits their utility in military terms. On the other hand, it is precisely those recruits who are frequently used for excessively violent operations: acts of torture, beheadings, and – of course – suicide operations. From the groups' perspective, foreigners who do not speak the local language, have no ties to local populations, and have come to Syria on purely ideological grounds are also the most dependent and, therefore, obedient. While doing fieldwork near the Syrian border, several fighters told us that Syrians would often refuse to become involved in executions and suicide operations, arguing that these tactics had "nothing to do with the kind of Islam that's been practiced in Syria for centuries". Foreigners, by contrast, are disproportionately represented among the suicide bombers, and have a near monopoly when it comes to involvement in beheadings and executions.

What Happens When They Return?

One of the most contentious questions among European policymakers is how to deal with fighters who return to their home countries. Yet it is far from certain how many will return, and how many of those will pose a terrorism threat. Significant numbers will die. For example, among the British fighters, for whom we track death notices, the share of "martyrs" has risen to as much as 10 per cent of the national contingent.[9] Others will try to stay in the conflict zone, having married or become committed to the idea of building the "Islamic State". Yet others will attempt to move to other conflict zones, migrate to places where jihadist groups have affiliated themselves to al Qaeda or the "Islamic State", or – simply – get stuck in Turkey and other transit countries. This doesn't render them harmless, quite the contrary, but it is unlikely they will pose an *immediate* threat to their home countries.

Of those who manage to return, a "dangerous minority" will commit acts of terrorism. The two rigorous academic studies that have examined the "veteran effect" among "jihadist" foreign fighters in previous conflicts both found that a majority of returnees (88 per cent and 75 per cent respectively) do not become involved in terrorism,[10] while the minority (12 and 25 per cent) tends to be more dangerous: they often have military skills (however rudimentary), are brutalized, and have become part of international

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[9] See Aisha Gani and Shiv Mallik, "Who are the British jihadis who have died in Iraq and Syria", *Guardian*, 23 October 2014; available at http://www.theguardian.com/world/ng-interactive/2014/oct/23/british-jihadis-died-in-iraq-and-syria-interactive.

[10] Thomas Hegghammer, "Should I stay or should I go? Explaining variation in Western Jihadists' choice between domestic and Foreign Fighting", *American Political Science Review*, 107(1) (2013), pp. 1-15; Jytte Klausen and Adrienne Roach, "Western Jihadists in the Syrian and Iraqi Insurgencies", Working Paper #4, *The Western Jihadism Project*, August 2014.

networks – all factors that make terrorist plots more viable and lethal.[11] It is hard to predict to what extent these findings will be replicated in the current conflict. The notion of a wider struggle for a "Caliphate" and growing Western involvement may increase the share of those who are determined to carry on the struggle after their return, while smart government responses and a political backlash against groups like the "Islamic State" may help to reduce it. The number of variables is endless, and the future dynamics of the conflict impossible to foresee.

Whatever the long-term trends, the issue is no longer an abstract problem. Nearly every European country from where recruits have "migrated" to Syria has now seen a first wave of returnees. For Germany, the number of Syria returnees was put at 150,[12] while in Britain, officials have recently mentioned a figure of 300, half of that country's contingent.[13] In practically every country in Europe, criminal charges have been brought against Syria returnees, most notably in Belgium, where 46 people have been charged in a single trial.[14] Belgium is also the country where a Syria returnee, Mehdi Nemmouche, has killed four people at a Jewish museum, and another attack is said to have been stopped by a police operation that killed two of the plot's ringleaders, both Syria "veterans".[15]

Our own observations suggest that there might be three distinct groups of returnees based on their motivations and experiences as part of the conflict. They can be summed up in *three Ds*. The first – the dangerous – have further radicalized and acquired the skills and determination to carry on, rejecting the idea that there exists a distinction between fighting Assad and fighting the West – or *in* the West. The second – the disturbed – suffer from combat-related stress and other mental health issues, often as a result of witnessing – or being personally involved in – excessive acts of violence. The final group – the disillusioned – no longer supports the organizations and/or causes they were involved in and want to re-integrate into their home societies. This doesn't imply that they have ceased being (cognitive) extremists but that – for the time being – the risk of becoming involved in political violence is low.[16]

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[11]   Ibid.

[12]   "Syrien-Rückkehrer: Paar zog mit kleinem Kind in bewaffneten Kampf", *Spiegel Online*, 16 October 2014; available at http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/syrien-rueckkehrer-paar-zog-mit-kind-in-den-dschihad-a-997619.html.

[13]   Zack Adesina, "Former jihadist's mother: UK risks future terror attacks", *BBC News*, 19 January 2015; available at http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-30854621.

[14]   Robert-Jan Bartunek, "Belgium launches its biggest Islamist extremist trial", *Reuters*, 29 September 2014.

[15]   "Brussels Jewish museum killing: suspect 'admitted attack'", *BBC News*, 1 June 2014; Ian Traynor, "Two dead in Belgium as police foil 'grand scale' terrorist plot", *Guardian*, 16 January 2015.

[16]   For the distinction between cognitive and violent extremists, see Peter R. Neumann, "The Trouble with Radicalization", *International Affairs*, 89(4) (2013), pp. 873-93.

Policy Recommendations

As this overview has shown, the current Western foreign fighter population in Syria and Iraq is not a monolithic entity. They differ in motivations, roles and experiences during their time in Syria, as well as their reasons for returning. It makes no sense, therefore, to pretend that they can all be tarred with the same brush. Doing so wouldn't be smart, nor would it make European countries any safer.

While there are strong reasons to stop more people from joining the conflict – for example, by temporarily confiscating their passports – the response to returnees needs to be determined by the risk they pose. Where Syria "veterans" are believed to be dangerous, prosecution leading to prison may be the only viable option. Society needs to be protected from the "disturbed" too, though this may involve psychological and, where needed, psychiatric treatment. The "disillusioned", in turn, may respond to de-radicalisation, intervention and exit programmes, such as the ones that already exist in countries like Britain, Germany, Sweden, and Denmark. Most important, though, countries need to develop reliable instruments for assessing – and monitoring – the risk according to which people are categorized as one or the other.

Regardless of the nature of a country's response, the numbers presented in this paper should make it clear that the foreign fighter issue represents one of the greatest challenges for European intelligence and law enforcement agencies for years to come. It will be one for European societies too: no matter how good a country's response, there is little doubt that the conflict will have consequences on the streets of Europe too. People's resilience will determine if the dangerous among the Syria "veterans" can succeed in spreading division and hate not only abroad but also at home.

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Five Charges in the Islamic Case against the Islamic State

Naveed S. Sheikh

Introduction: The Vexed Question of Representativeness

The group that, after numerous titular transformations, calls itself the Islamic Caliphal State (*Dawlat al-Khilāfat al-Islamiyya*) has captured international headlines as a consequence of a conflation of factors: its capturing and consolidation of sizeable territories across both Iraq and Syria, the bandwagoning effect among satellite jihadists from Algeria to Afghanistan, and the graphic violence that has precipitated both. Its roster of highly evocative, yet stylised, acts of barbarity includes beheadings, immolations, summary executions, dispossession, exiling and, in all its neo-medievalism, the reintroduction of slavery. To the extent that terrorism is the propaganda of the (mis)deed, few have perpetuated terrorism as well as the Islamic Caliphal State (ICS).[1] To be sure, though, such excesses of violence and malevolence are justified not with recourse to Hobbes, Machiavelli or Mao, but the Qur'an, the Sunna and the Shari'a. In other words, despite its refusal to submit to dictates of both law and ethics—an epistemological position that in the jargon is referred to as "antinomianism"—the ICS situates itself not only within the ancient tradition of Islamicate warfare and governance but as its natural conclusion.

The present article shall seek to challenge this self-representation by recourse to the stipulations of the primary and secondary sources of the Shari'a as well as the contemporary Muslim responses to the ICS. It will seek to negate the pretensions of Islamic credentials on the part of the ICS in reference to six arguments that belie the claim that its dicta and actions are sanctioned by Islam. The five charges against the

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[1] Prior to its adaptation of the name of Islamic Caliphal State (*Dawlat al-Khilafat al-Islamiyya*) on 29 June 2014, which is the term that the current article shall adopt, the group was variously referred to as ISIS, for Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, or ISIL, for Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. The name change rendered redundant the debate that had raged about how to refer to the group. Indeed, in 2014, the US Congress had debated the issue and decided to use the acronym ISIL, over ISIS, as the latter was the name of an ancient Egyptian deity. More perceptive, perhaps, was the claim that the Administration preferred to avoid explicit reference to Syria (the final S in ISIS), as its Syria policy had been far from successful. See Jamie Fuller, "ISIS vs ISIL vs Islamic State: The Political Importance of a Much-Debated Acronym," *Washington Post*, 20 January 2015.

ICS are as follows: (*i*) the ICS is not a legitimate caliphate, (*ii*) ICS leaders have no religious authority to (re)define Islam, (*iii*) the ICS enacts collective excommunication of the majority of Muslims, (*iv*) the ICS violates Islamic stipulations on lawful warfare and human rights; and finally (*v*) the ICS is a form of neo-Kharijism.

Given the incessant references to Islam in the discourses by (and on) the ICS, casual observers could be forgiven for equating the Islamic Caliphal State with Islam. Graeme Wood recently made the *prima facie* case for the implication of Islam in the making of the ICS in a lengthy cover article in the March 2015 issue of *The Atlantic*, provoking heated debate across a range of media.[2] The magazine was, of course, no stranger to controversy on matters Muslim, having exactly a quarter of a century earlier provided the pages for the much-cited Bernard Lewis article on "The Roots of the Muslim Rage"—a contribution which had introduced not only the concept but the phraseology of the "Clash of Civilizations" into the lexicon of policy analysis.[3] Like Lewis before him, Wood's article falls into a long tradition of essentializing the Oriental Other, a stereotyping that, as Edward Said has shown, goes back to European colonialism and its justification of imperial advances on the grounds of a "civilizing mission" (*mission civilisatrice*) that was also positioned racially as the "White man's burden".[4] Europe's encounter with the faithful of Islam was particularly troublesome, for as Islam expanded into Europe from three directions—the Balkans in the east, the Iberian peninsula in the west and Sicily in the south—Christian Europe faced a dual theological-cum-strategic challenge.

This goes some way to explain the operationalization of "Islam" as a double signifier—one that is, in effect, predicated on a conflation of Islam as a belief system and Islam as a social body. When Wood states that the Islamic Caliphal State is "Islamic, very Islamic,"[5] he could, in theory, be using the word either (normatively) to relate to Islamic ideals or (positively) as a term for a given relation to the Muslim world. In either case, the statement is problematic. When taken in the first sense, the problem with the statement is that it is erroneous in its reading of Islamic normativity; the problem with the statement when understood in the second sense is that it is non-explanatory in its tautology.

What is required, therefore, is a disaggregation of what is meant by "Islamic." *Stricto sensu*, "Islamic" has to refer to canonical normativity: to Scripture, to juristic opinions of the scholarly estate and to the derivative body of injunctions in the form of the Islamic law, the Shari'a. There are of course those, like Clifford Geertz, who argue that religion always has to be approached from anthropological or sociological

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[2] Graeme Wood, "What ISIS Really Wants," *The Atlantic* (March 2015).

[3] Bernard Lewis, "The Roots of the Muslim Rage," *The Atlantic* (September 1990).

[4] Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 2nd edition (New York: Penguin, 1995); Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 2nd edition (New York: Vintage, 1994).

[5] Wood, "What the ISIS really wants," Op. cit.

perspectives, never on the basis of theological maxims.[6] In effect, Islam is what Muslims make of it. Yet, such constructivist ontology erases an important distinction, namely that between identity on the one hand and formalized and canonical injunctions that is the edifice of scriptural traditions on the other. Just as Islam has an orthodoxy—which is to say, a distinct creed and catechism—so too does it have an *orthopraxy*—a conception of model behaviour and virtuous practice. In this sense, Muslim practices are not necessarily Islamic practices, and the differential use of the adjective is important to uphold.[7] Professor Juan Cole makes the point well:

> The word 'Islamic' in Arabic, and in English as well, has to do with the ideals of the Muslim religion. It is thus analogous to the word 'Judaic'. We speak of 'Islamic ethics' as a field of study, just as we do 'Judaic ethics'. Not all Muslims or Jews conform to the ethics preached in their religious traditions. Some are even criminals. But they are Muslim criminals and Jewish criminals. They are not Islamic Criminals and Judaic criminals. [...] The attempt of the American right wing to mainstream the phrase 'Islamic terrorism' takes advantage of general American ignorance of the Muslim tradition: it is a linguistic trap intended to make us all Islamophobes.[8]

Indeed, the distinction between (normatively) Islamic and (descriptively) Muslim provides for more than a mere academic point, for in semantically Islamizing practices that are not sanctioned by Islamic sacred law, as in the very constellation "Islamic terrorism," we are unwittingly supporting the narrative of radicals who wish to portray their aims (and sometimes means) as in accordance with Islamic teachings. But it goes without saying that terrorism has no religion, just as crime, corruption and oppression doesn't. We, accordingly, need to correct the terminology, lest the analytic discourse inadvertently "authorise" the deployment of terrorism by vigilante groups.

Finally, apart from the question of normative compliance, we need to be cognizant also of the matter of scale. In the case of the Islamic Caliphal State, even if we take the highest estimates of the number of its fighters (figures which derive mostly from the region itself and are much higher than Western intelligence estimates), we find that they would represent at the maximum 1/100 of a single percent of a global Islamdom that now numbers just over 1.6 billion adherents. In other words, for every adherent to the Islamic Caliphal State, at least 10,000 stand in opposition to it: for the statistically

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[6] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

[7] Marshall Hodgson coined the term "Islamicate" to refer to Muslim-majority cultures. See *idem, The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974). I use this term not simply for Muslim-majority but as a term that bridges Islamic and Muslim, i.e., a term that signifies a cultural and idiomatic appropriation of the religious but with sources that are not necessarily from within the scriptural tradition.

[8] Juan Cole, "How Islamic is the 'Islamic State'," *The Nation* (February 2015).

inclined, such numbers should be revealing in response to ill-founded claims that the ICS is representative. The authoritative work *Who Speaks for Islam? What a Billion Muslims Really Think*, authored by John L Esposito and Dahlia Mogahed, is based on poll data from more than 35 countries.[9] It found that 93 percent of Muslims polled unequivocally condemned terrorism, as expressed in the 9/11 attacks, and did so on religious grounds. The remaining 7 percent defended their position not with recourse to the Quran or Islamic injunctions, but to secular political grievances or distorted concepts of "eye-for-eye" reciprocity.

Resisting the Legitimacy of the ICS: From the White House to the Muslim Conclave

In recent years, intellectuals, religious leaders and political leaders have vigorously sought to challenge the ICS self-representation as the leader of Islam. Some have argued that its claim to represent Islam, or even to be Islamic, remains a faux veneer on what is ultimately a movement driven by the familiar ambitions for power, status and resources. In this sense, *Idealpolitik* simply masks *Realpolitik*. Perhaps the most high-profile denunciation of the supposed Islamicity of the ICS came in President Obama's televised remarks in September 2014. Sharing with his nation and their allies the assumptions and strategies for fighting the new menace, he observed:

> We are not at war with Islam. We are at war with people who have perverted Islam.
> [...] They try to portray themselves as religious leaders, holy warriors in defence of
> Islam. We must never accept the premise that they put forward, for it is a lie. Nor
> should we grant these terrorists the religious legitimacy that they seek. They are not
> religious leaders. They are terrorists.[10]

President Obama's statements signified an attempt to drive a wedge between traditional nomocentric Islam and the ICS (*qua* idea) on the one hand, and between global Islamdom and the ICS (*qua* group) on the other. In questioning their religious credentials, he sought to deny the ICS the religious legitimacy that could globalize a regional conflict, and in challenging their claim to leadership, he perhaps applauded the good sense of the large majority of adherents to Islam. Yet, however well-intended, Obama—not known to be an accredited *fatwa* provider—could not speak on behalf of the Muslim world community. Cognizant of this discursive leap, a mere two weeks later he called out, in an address to the UN General Assembly, to Muslim leaders around the world

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[9]   John L. Esposito and Dalia Mogahed, *Who Speaks for Islam? What a Billion Muslims Really Think* (Washington, DC: Gallup Press, 2008).

[10]   "Transcript of Obama's Remarks on the Fight Against ISIS," *The New York Times*, 10 September 2014, available online: http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/11/world/middleeast/obamas-remarks-on-the-fight-against-isis.html?_r=1.

to denounce the ICS: "It is time for the world—*especially Muslim communities*—to explicitly, forcefully, and consistently reject the ideology of al Qaeda and ISIL," he appealed.[11] It is quite possible that Obama's intended audience was less the worldwide Muslim community, and more so the political Right domestically, who had, since his initial remarks, decried his lack of subscription to the Clash-of-Civilizations optic.

Propitiously, though, there has been no shortage of denunciations of the ICS by Muslim leaders and institutions. Indeed, those who continuously called for Muslims to speak out, were clearly not listening to Muslims. Already in late-July 2014, the Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, representing some 57 Muslim-majority countries, Iyad Ameen Madani, had condemned ICS actions as having "nothing to do with Islam."[12] The following month, the Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia, 'Abd al-Aziz ibn Abdullah Aal al-Shaykh, had condemned the Islamic State, with the fierce rhetoric characteristic of Saudi religious discourse: "Extremist and militant ideas and terrorism which spread decay on earth, destroying human civilization, are not in any way part of Islam, but are the Enemy No. 1 of Islam, for Muslims are their first victims."[13] Cairo's Al-Azhar University, the premier seat of learning in Sunni Islam, launched a campaign asking journalist not to refer to ISIS as the Islamic State, preferring instead QSIS for "al-Qa'ida Separatists in Iraq and Syria."[14] At the same time, the Egyptian Grand Mufti, hailing from the same institution, Shaykh Shawky Ibrahim Abd al-Karim Allam, strongly condemned the ICS and declared that "Islam didn't carry a message of sabotage and destruction. It only came to serve humanity, to achieve world peace and bring mercy to the world."[15]

In France, home to Europe's largest Muslim minority, the Grand Mosque in Paris issued the "Paris Appeal" with the wording:

> Barbarians are perpetrating the worst crimes against humanity and now threaten people, [as well as] stability and peace among the people of the entire region. [We] unequivocally denounce the terrorist acts that constitute crimes against humanity, and solemnly declare that Islam does not advocate such groups, their supporters and their recruits. These actions […] are not true to the teachings of Islam.[16]

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[11] "Remarks by President Obama in Address to the United Nations General Assembly," 24 September 2014: https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/09/24/remarks-president-obama-address-united-nations-general-assembly.

[12] "OIC condemns ISIS forced displacement of Christians in Iraq," Abouna.org, 22 July 2014: http://en.abouna.org/en/content/oic-condemns-isis-forced-displacement-christians-iraq.

[13] "Saudi Arabia's Grand Mufti denounces Islamic State group as un-Islam," *Reuters*, 25 August 2014.

[14] See the Facebook profile for this campaign: https://www.facebook.com/QSnotIS?fref=nf.

[15] Sarah El Sirgany and Ian Lee, "A battle for the soul of Islam," *CNN Online*, 5 February 2015: http://edition.cnn.com/2015/02/05/world/egypt-grand-mufti-interview/.

[16] Pamela Constable, "French Muslim leaders denounce ISIS brutality," *Washington Post*, 10 September 2014.

In Britain, from where hundreds of youth had joined the ICS, the twelve largest mosques issued a joint communiqué, condemning the ICS as "un-Islamic to the core."[17] In Russia, the oddly-named Spiritual Directorate of Muslims in Russia issued a fatwa, stating,

> The member of the Ulama [Islamic scholars] council, on the basis of the Koran and the Sunna and other legal sources, have shown and proved that all actions of the organization that calls itself 'Islamic State' are contradicting Islam [...] The followers of ISIS are mistakenly interpreting Islam as the religion of brutality and cruelty, of violence, torture and killing.[18]

In the United States, the Washington-based Council on American-Islamic Relations issued a statement saying: "No words can describe the horror, disgust and sorrow felt by Muslims in America and worldwide at the unconscionable and un-Islamic violence perpetrated by the terror group ISIS. The criminal actions of ISIS are antithetical to the faith of Islam."[19]

But the most elaborate and significant of all was a truly erudite and considered critique of the ideational foundations of the ICS, penned in twenty-six tightly written pages. In the very week before Obama's address before the United Nations, an international group of high-ranking Islamic scholars and leaders issued a lengthy "Open Letter" to the leader of the ICS, Ibrahim Awwad al-Badri al-Samarrai (better known under his chosen name of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi), with a point-by-point denunciation of ICS values and strategies.[20] As of May 2015, the letter has been endorsed by nearly 200 civic, political and religious leaders from across the Muslim world, representing all major denominations and geographies.[21] Paradigmatic of the response of traditional Islam to the ICS menace, I shall in what follows refer to this "Open Letter" in my discussion of each of the major charges against the ICS.

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[17] Damien Sharkov, "Britain's largest mosques condemn 'un-Islamic' ISIS radicals," *Newsweek*, 9 April 2014.

[18] "Russian Muslim denounce ISIS as 'enemies of Islam'," *RT News*, 31 March 2015.

[19] "CAIR condemns killing of journalist Steven Sotloff by 'Anti-Islamic' ISIS," *Yahoo News*, 2 September 2014: http://news.yahoo.com/cair-condemns-killing-journalist-steven-sotloff-anti-islamic-182600042.html.

[20] The letter is available in ten different languages; see "Open Letter to Dr Ibrahim Awwad al-Badri, *alias* Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, and to the Fighters and Followers of the Self-Declared 'Islamic State'," 19 September 2014, available online http://www.lettertobaghdadi.com/.

[21] It is unclear from the information available in the public realm, who originated this letter. Given its language and references, it appears likely that it is the same group that was in 2004 responsible for the ecumenical "Amman Message" (www.ammanmessage.com) and, three years later, the high-profile "Common Word" initiative (www.acommonword.com), i.e., a group of leading scholars coordinated by the Royal Jordanian Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought.

Charge 1: The ICS is not a Legitimate Caliphate

Since the abolition of the Ottoman caliphate in 1924, by the forceful hand of the Kemalist republicans in Turkey, two questions have haunted Islam as a faith community. The first relates to the question of political power: In the post-Caliphal world, how is Islamdom to remain a singular political force that is united across territorial, linguistic and ethnic divides? In the face of the encroachment of European imperial powers in areas previously governed, directly or indirectly, by the Sublime Porte, the question of pan-Islamic unity was acute to the Islamist movement that first found expression in the Middle East with the foundation of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. The second question pertained to Islamic positionality: absent the Caliph, who was now to act as the ultimate arbiter of the Islamic position on questions of the day? The *étatist* fragmentation of the worldwide Muslim faith community, the *umma*, into distinct and sometimes conflicting states had complicated a picture in which the *umma* was already divided into different, and indeed often rival, understandings of the sacred law. In the mind of the Islamists, the problem of state boundaries became strangely interlinked with the notion of *fiqh* boundaries, and the eradication of both became the mission of an Islamism that was more inspired by Western models of totalitarianism than an Islamicate history characterized by multiple authorities.[22]

For those who did not identify in the forceful implementation of the Westphalian model of territorial states across and beyond the Middle East a pathway to modernity, the re-establishment of the Caliphate remained a panacea for the woes of the Muslim condition. So much so that many Islamist movements were driven by a vision of rectifying the historical wrong entailed in the collapse of the institution that had lasted from the Prophet's death until the perceived triumph of imperial powers over Islamdom.[23] Still, pragmatism rather than utopianism had guided the general tenor of partisan Islamists, and the re-establishment of the Caliphate was an ideological trope, not so much a programmatic commitment.[24]

The June 2014 promulgation of the Caliphate in parts of Iraq and Syria should be viewed in this light. With its self-coronation, the ICS sought to position itself no longer as an(other) organization, nor simply as a (new) state, but as the Caliphal institution *de novo*. Its promulgations were now authoritative and not to be contested by the faithful. Adopting the *nom de guerre* of Abu Bakr, Islam's very first Caliph (r. 632-34 CE),

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[22] See Timothy J. Winter, *Bombing without Moonlight: The Origins of Suicidal Terrorism* (Bristol: Amal Press, 2004).

[23] For a discussion of the paradigmatic amongst them, see Suha Taji-Farouki, *A Fundamental Quest: Hizb al-Tahrir and the Search for the Islamic Caliphate* (London: Grey Seal, 1996), and Vernie Liebl, "The Caliphate," *Middle Eastern Studies* 45: 3 (2009), pp. 373-391.

[24] For an early examination of this dynamic, see, e.g., Abdel Salam Sidahmad and Anoushiravan Ehteshami, *Islamic Fundamentalism* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996).

rather than his prior teknonym Abu Du'a, al-Baghdadi sought to illustrate that history had come full circle. The abolished Caliphate had been resurrected but not along the lines of the "murderous" Ummayads, the "ostentatious" Abbasids, or the "deviant" Ottomans, but on the pattern of the very first and most noble of Caliphates—the caliphate of the righteous (*rashidūn*). Like other ideologically entrenched states, the ICS flag arrogates to itself Islamicate insignia. The flag uses a representation of the Prophetic seal, so as to illustrate the figurative seal of approval but also the notion that the ICS is the heir to the Prophetic authority, the Prophet's vicar.

Needless to say, the ICS was identified as a legitimate caliphate by its own adherents only. Scholars across the Muslim word denounced it as sedition (*fitna*) and rebellion (*baghy*), both categories of serious offences within the classical Islamic penal system.[25] The reconstitution of the Caliphate, scholars insisted, required the consensus of the *ahl al-hall wa'l 'aqd* (lit. "those that loosen and tie"), an archaic term that signified the political, religious and social elites. The "Open Letter to al-Baghdadi" asserted, "In truth, the caliphate must emerge from a consensus of Muslim countries, organizations of Islamic scholars and Muslims across the globe."[26] It argued that if every leader were to declare his own polity as the new caliphate, chaos would ensue from rival claimants to the Caliphate and the institution would be meaningless.[27] Within the contemporary period alone, the Taliban's Mullah Omar styled himself *Amīr al-Mu'minīn*, a synonym for Caliph—hence within the jihadi movement itself there was at least two claimants, while most of the old-school al-Qa'ida organization remained loyal to other leaders, including Ayman al-Zawahiri, and dismissed the promulgation of the Caliphate simply as a publicity stunt to draw more radicals.[28]

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[25] For a seminal discussion of, respectively, the Islamicate concepts of *hirāba* (brigandry) and *baghy* (rebellion), see Sherman Jackson, "Domestic Terrorism in the Islamic Legal Tradition," *Muslim World*, 91:3/4, pp. 293-310.

[26] "Open Letter to al-Baghdadi," Op. cit.

[27] This is not to suggest that Muslim history has not seen rival claimants. For an analysis on how this was resolved, see Naveed Sheikh, *The New Politics of Islam: Pan-Islamic Foreign Policy in a World of States* (London: Routledge, 2003).

[28] Mia Bloom has in her scholarship drawn attention to the process of "outbidding" whereby extremist organizations seek to draw new recruits by appearing more militant and thus more committed to the cause relative to other organizations. This is expressed in continuous publicity stunts, such as particularly dramatic terrorist attacks or particularly powerful videos. See Mia Bloom, *Dying To Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005). I am of the opinion that the idea of "outbidding" can be extended to the very promulgation of the Caliphate.

Charge 2: ICS Leaders have No Religious Authority to (Re)define Islam

In motifs that are more pronounced than those belonging to the al-Qa'ida it grew out of, the Islamic Caliphal State is embedded in a sectarian allegiance to Salafism.[29] A substantial body of work now exists on Salafism as a creedal orientation, both it its quietist and militant forms, but much of it overlooks the central feature of the stream, namely its opposition to the precedence and scholastic structure of the canonical schools of law (the *madhāhib*). Salafism, as it originated in the 18th-century puritanical movement of Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab, sought to engineer a back-to-basics return to the episteme that drove forth the faith at its very formative period—the generation of the Companions of the Prophet and the following two generations, known collectively as the period of the *Salaf al-Sālih* (or the "pious forbears"). The multiplicity of scholastic approaches to exegesis, law and ethics were bypassed in the quest for simplification and purification. The corollary to this was its anticlericalism, which incidentally antedated the antisacerdotalism of the French revolution by a few decades. Instead of recourse to the Shariatic scholars and their millennium-long tradition in Islamic juristic method (*fiqh*) and the resultant body of injunctions (*ahkām*), Salafism initiated an interpretative allowance for those who were not schooled in the traditional sciences of Scriptural formulae (*nass*) and rule-derivation (*qiyās*). It called, in a sense, for a radical, but also misplaced, egalitarianism that loosened the interpretative control of the tradition and allowed autodidacts to pronounce the import of Scripture.

From the preceding, Western scholars mostly identified literalism as the great epistemological change, and true enough, Salafi adherents were neither equipped for nor inclined to ratiocination, inference or contextualization as heuristic methods. However, what was more problematic than literalism was the *selectivism* of sources: not only was the hadith corpus significantly shrunk by the insistence that only rigorously authenticated (*sahīh*) narrations could be accepted—a principle that definitively misconstrued what it meant for a Prophetic tradition to be "weak" (*da'īf*)[30]—but the secondary sources in the forms of commentaries and supracommentaries were mostly abandoned, just as *fiqh* manuals and handbooks on evidentiary bases of the different schools of law were rendered redundant.

Drawing on the non-conformist heritage of Salafism, the ICS too, in its iteration of "Islamic law," would be met with two consistent objections: (a) that its leaders were not qualified to comment on matters of the Shari'a, as they had no credible training in the religious sciences, and (b) that its reading of the proof-texts of the Shari'a was highly

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29 The themes, references and content of the blog of the perhaps most notorious UK-born female recruit to ICS, Umm Layth ("Mother of the Lion"), makes this clear. See her blog: http://fa-tubalilghuraba.tumblr.com/.

30 For a discussion of this intricate debate, see Gibril Fouad Haddad, *Sunna Notes: Studies in Hadith and Doctrine* (London: Aqsa Publications, 2005), pp. 160-64.

selective. Indeed, the "Open Letter to Al-Baghdadi," in somewhat didactic form, lists all the prerequisites that one who issues *fatawa* must have: he must master the linguistic sciences of Arabic syntax and parsing; he must be a scholar of the Quranic text and its exegetical works; he must have undisputed expertise in the principles of jurisprudence and the sacred body of law; he must furthermore know the historical contexts in which the Quran was revealed (*asbāb an-nuzūl*) and the *ahadīth* pronounced (*asbāb al-wurūth*); he must be able to verify the chains of transmission of *ahadīth*; and finally be aware of the contingencies of history, culture (*'ada*), and tradition (*'urf*) and on this basis he must be able to distinguish the general rule (*al-'umūm*) from the applied rule (*al-khusūs*).[31] The not-so-subtle point was that al-Baghdadi, like Bin Laden before him, was utterly unqualified to make pronouncements on the Shari'a.[32] Quoting a rhetorical question in the Qur'an, the former was asked, "Are those who know equal to those who know not?" (Quran, 39:9). Whether as a consequence of deliberate obfuscation or the result of lacking expertise, al-Baghdadi was under fire for lacking a *locus standi*. His apparent selectivism, moreover, was challenged by another Quranic passage: "What, do you believe in parts of the Book, and disbelieve in other parts?" (Quran, 2:85).[33] As such, the cherry-picking of scriptural passages to justify the political agenda of the movement, in the process legitimizing violence and justifying oppression in the name of religious imperatives, was denounced as not only disingenuous but as the very expression of a lack of commitment to Islamic principles.

Charge 3: The ICS Enacts Collective Excommunication of the Majority of Muslims

Muslim history has been relatively insulated from the devastating wars of religion that plagued the European continent until the conclusion of the Thirty-Year War with the Peace of Westphalia (1648). This was, arguably, the outcome of a confluence of factors: in part the adoptive simplicity of matters doctrinal (*aqā'id*), in part the division of creedal matters into matters of consensus (*'ijma*) and matters of legitimate diversity (*ikhtilāf*), and in part the general subservience of matters of orthodoxy to matters of orthopraxy. The 9th-century inquisition, the *mihna*, initiated under the Abbasid Caliph al-Ma'mun (r. 813-33) stands out as an exception in medieval Muslim history all the way up to the initiation, and success, of the Wahhabi mission in the mid-18th century.

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[31] "Open Letter to al-Baghdadi," Op. cit. For clarity and elaboration, I have added terms from the religious sciences in the above summation.

[32] Irrespective of his position as a lay person, rather than a mufti, Osama Bin Laden was one of four jihadist leaders to issue a "Fatwa," in February of 1998, calling for the liquidation of American troops and civilians, as well as their allies (however defined). See Gilles Kepel and Jean-Pierre Milelli, *Al-Qaeda in Its Own Words* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press), pp. 53-56.

[33] "Open Letter to al-Baghdadi," Op. cit.

Then, once again, questions of "who is a true Muslim?" surfaced, as Wahhabi zealots denounced traditional Islamic practices as either accretions (*bid'a*) or polytheism (*shirk*), thus negating the majority of Muslims to a realm of damnation, outside the pale of faith and salvation. Although traditional Sunni Islam retains no mechanism for excommunication (*takfīr*) outside the formal, and individual, cases presented before the court of the Qadi, Wahhabi Islam was predicated on a binary distinction between true and false believers. What I refer to as the "True-Believers Syndrome" remains a general trope in the later development of Wahhabism—after its globalization, rebadged as Salafism—enabling it, on the one hand, to eliminate the natural diversity and indeed institutionalised pluralism of the classical schools of Islam (both doctrinal and legal) and, on the other, to promulgate itself as the sole inheritor of the revelation.

As Salafist radicalism (an ahistorical current) has globalized, so has its animus towards historical manifestations of Islam. In the new Caliphal State, religious education is now synonymous with the narrow curriculum of suitable-for-Salafis tracts, and much of the local literary heritage has unceremoniously been confined to book-burning ceremonies. Similarly, heritage sites (in particular mosques) that signify different dispensations within Islam—such as Sufi, Shi'i or simply *madhhab*-abiding Sunni—have been blow up so as to eradicate even the memory of a non-Salafi Islam. The iconoclasm of the ICS manifested itself in the wholesale destruction of religious sites that followed its conquests of the Nineveh Governorate in 2014. With explosives and bulldozers nearly 50 religious structures belonging to both Shi'i and mainstream Sunni religious groups were unceremoniously destroyed by the ICS, including the Qubba Husayniyya Mosque in Mosul, the Jawad Husayniyya Mosque in Tal Afar, the 13th-century Shaykh Fathi shrine in Mosul, the Sa'ad bin Aqeel shrine in Tal Afar, and the tomb of the much-revered 12th-century Sufi saint Ahmad al-Rifa'i in Mahlabiya.[34]

The product of a determined policy, rather than the unintended consequences of the fog of war, the misplaced iconoclasm shocked the world community by destroying even the Tomb of the Prophet Jonah in Mosul, honoured by all adherents to the Abrahamic religions.[35] Having, moreover, failed to remove copies of the Qur'an and other religious texts before detonating explosives, the Islamic Caliphal State humiliated Islamic religious sentiments. That the ICS was committed to a rather different idea of Islam was

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[34] See Sarah Kaufmann, "5 Beautiful Historic Shrines Destroyed Forever by Militants in Iraq," *Mic*, 8 July 2014: http://mic.com/articles/93065/5-beautiful-historic-shrines-destroyed-forever-by-militants-in-iraq; "Mass Destruction of Islamic Cultural Heritage Sites in Iraq," *Gates of Nineveh*, 5 July 2014: https://gatesofnineveh. wordpress.com/2014/ 07/05/mass-destruction-of-islamic-cultural-heritage-sites-in-iraq/; "Islamic State Claims Shia Mosque Destruction," *Al-Jazeera*, 5 July 2014: http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/07/islamic-state-claims-shia-mosque-destruction-20147414533266331.html; "ISIS Jihadists Demolish Mosques, Shrines in Northern Iraq," *RT News*, 5 July 2014: http://rt.com/news/170652-jihadists-destroy-mosques-iraq/.

[35] "ISIS militants blow up Jonah's tomb," *The Guardian*, 24 July 2014: http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/24/isis-militants-blow-up-jonah-tomb.

patently obvious, and dramatically illustrated in the report that one of its members had threatened that it would destroy the *sanctum sanctorum* in Mecca after the future fall of the Saudi kingdom: "If Allah wills, we will kill those who worship stones in Mecca and destroy the Kaaba. People go to Mecca to touch the stones, not for Allah."[36] Apparently, for the ICS nothing was holy, except their own quest for dominance.

Taking to heart the historical mission of caliphates, which included fighting heresy, the ICS has anathematized the majority of the Muslims, on grounds both creedal and political. The "Open Letter to al-Baghdadi" reminds him that, contra the imposed uniformity in his territory, the Islamic dictum remains that difference of opinion is a mercy to believers. It proceeds to argue, "It is forbidden to declare others non-Muslim (*takfir*) based on any matter in which there is a difference of opinion among Muslim scholars. It is [also] forbidden to declare an entire group of people non-Muslim."[37] In relegating the majority of believers to the status of mal- or disbelievers, the unacknowledged irony is that the ICS has significantly shrunk the number of believers that it purportedly represents.

Within the Jihadi-Salafist movement itself, this has not been received with uncritical applause, not so much because of dissenting views on the abhorrence of the mosques that supposedly manifest polytheism, but more as a manifestation of a strategic divide in the Jihadist movement between those that call foremost for public support and sympathy as a resource for rebel groups (in effect, an extension of a Maoist dictum), and those who give salience instead to the strategic application of force (or what Che Guevara referred to as *foco*).[38]

So far I have described the nature of the ICS in relation to its sectarian identity. However, given the excessive quest for uniformity and purity that goes beyond even the historical expressions of Salafism, the question arises as to whether we have to approach the ICS not from the vantage point of a sect alone, but from the vantage point of a cult. Within the sociological literature that classifies social groups, a cult has been defined as a group that deviates from the mainstream, "deriving their inspiration from outside of the predominant religious culture."[39] Often, but not always, a cult is led by a charismatic leader who defines the inside-outside dichotomy in an absolutist sense—a dichotomy that is policed by a communal or totalistic organization, in turn reliant on systematic programmes of indoctrination and aggressive proselytization predicated on the endogenous valorization of the bond of brotherhood over any pre-existing familial

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[36] Yasmine Hafiz, "Reported ISIS Member Says They will Destroy the Kaaba in Mecca," *Huffington Post*, 1 July 2014: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/07/01/isis-destroy-kaaba-mecca_n_5547635.html.

[37] "Open Letter to al-Baghdadi," Op. cit., p. 7.

[38] See, e.g., the discussion in Thomas G. Mahnken and Joseph A. Maiolo, *Strategic Studies: A Reader* (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 244-286.

[39] James T. Richardson, "Definitions of Cult: From Sociological-Technical to Popular-Negative," *Review of Religious Research* 34:4 (1993), pp. 348–356, here p. 349.

or friendship ties.[40] In the ICS, we witness, *mutatis mutandis*, all of the markers with the added complexity that its mission has two layers: the political and the religious. Indeed, the ICS may best be explained as a political cult.[41] In recruitment videos as well as public declarations to the outside world, the political is foremost: here the concern relates to the re-establishment of coercive power within the ideological framework of militant Salafism. Glory, brotherhood and honour thus coalesce and in the process salvation becomes a political, not spiritual, process.

CHARGE 4: THE ICS VIOLATES ISLAMIC STIPULATIONS ON LAWFUL WARFARE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The indiscriminate aggression that the ICS has been purveyor of violates several precepts within international law, including crimes against peace, crimes against humanity and war crimes. Although these are post-Nuremberg headings, the juristic tradition in Islam was an early contributor to the international humanitarian law by means of the Abbasid jurists who codified the provisions of rights of humankind (*huqūq al-'ibād*) as well as the provisions of the rights of God over humankind (*huqūq Allāh*). While not all provisions are in conformity with liberal conceptions of rights, the Shariatic stipulations are important criteria for judging the ICS self-portrayal as guided by Islamic precepts.

Ibn Rushd (1126-98 CE), better known in the West under the Latinized name of Averroes, relates in his juristic magnum opus *Bidayat al-Mujtahid* a binding consensus in the first generation of Islam pertaining to the unlawfulness of killing prisoners of war.[42] From the Prophetic injunctions regarding rightful warfare, other jurists insisted on the unlawfulness of mutilating enemy combatants and the unlawfulness of targeting non-combatants, hermits, women, children, the elderly and decrepit, apart from the inviolability of places of worship and even cattle, crops and fruit-bearing trees.[43] In addition to these *jus in bello* stipulations that constricted the rules of *jihād*—at no point allowing for a "total war" of annihilation, nor indeed a war for conversion—other

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[40]   The discussion of cults in the social sciences dates back to Max Weber. A discussion from a decidedly evangelical anticult perspective is found in Ron Rhodes, *The Challenge of the Cults and New Religions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001). A more academic text is found in Lorne L. Dawson (ed.), *Cults and New Religious Movements: A Reader* (London: Wiley Blackwell, 2003).

[41]   The term "political cult" was popularized by Dennis Tourish and Tim Wohlforth in their book *On the Edge: Political Cults Right and Left* (London: M.E. Sharpe, 2000), and later used in Alexandra Stein, *Inside Out: A Memoir of Entering and Breaking Out of a Minneapolis Political Cult* (Minneapolis: North Star Press, 2002).

[42]   Ibn Rushd, *The Distinguished Jurist's Primer: Bidayat al-Mujtahid wa Nihayat al-Muqtasid*, (trans. Imran A.K. Nyazee), vol. I (Reading: Garnett, 1994).

[43]   See, e.g., Asma Afsaruddin, "Recovering the early semantic purview of jihad and martyrdom," in Qamar ul-Huda (ed.), *Crescent and Dove: Peace and Conflict-Resolution in Islam* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2010).

provisions approximated what in Western intellectual history would be classed *jus ad bellum* conditions: War could be fought for the defence of the community (or its allies) only and had to be fought under rightful political authority, not by vigilante militants.[44] Even Ibn Taimiyya (1263-1328 CE), the key Medieval reference for radical Islam, insisted that *jihād* could be fought only on the basis of the initiation of hostilities and never on the basis of mere difference in belief.

It is therefore clear that the ICS violates Islam's own precepts for *jihād*. A clearly frustrated authorship in the "Open Letter to al-Baghdadi" reminds him of the Quranic passage: "God does not forbid you in regard to those who did not wage war against you on account of religion and did not expel you from your homes that you should treat them kindly and deal with them justly. Assuredly God loves the just" (Qur'an, 60:8).[45] A different passage with a similar theme reads: "O you who believe, be upright for God, as witnesses to justice; and let not the hatred of a certain people incite you to act inequitably. Be just; that is nearer to righteousness. And keep your duty to God. Surely He is aware of all that you do" (Qur'an 5:8). The authors of the "Open Letter" reminds al-Baghdadi of the Quranic principle that whoever kills an innocent, "it shall be as if he had slain mankind altogether" (5:32). They further reiterate that the killing of innocents "is *haraam* (forbidden and inviolable under Islamic Law), it is also one of the most abominable sins (*mubiqat*)."[46]

In addition to the uninhibited scale of the killing, the brutal modality of the liquidations too shocked global Muslim conscience. Horrific beheadings of jumpsuit-clad Western hostages, duly recorded in high-resolution cameras from multiple angles, were publicised to express not only the dangerous ruthlessness of the perpetrators but the cattle-like dehumanized nature of the enemy, who was now literally being slaughtered like animals. Such videos were designed to shock and incite, or indeed to shock and awe. Nor was the treatment reserved for non-Muslim enemies alone. The death by immolation of the Jordanian pilot Moaz al-Kasasbeh in January 2015 was even more horrific, deliberately mocking a clear injunction of the Shari'a. Indeed, little-known in the West is that burning to death remains an explicitly proscribed form of killing in Islamic law, even for venomous animals let alone humans, for the *hadith* (as recorded in the Abu Dawud collection) states, "Punishment by fire does not behove anyone except the Master of Fire [God]."

Muslims often emphasise that, as per the Quranic system of ethics, compassion and mercy are the foremost operative principles of conduct, and it is for this reason that nearly each chapter of the Qur'an is preambled with the liturgical formulation, "In the name of God, the most Merciful, the most Compassionate". The "Open Letter" reminds

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[44]   Ibid.

[45]   "Open Letter to al-Baghdadi," Op. cit.

[46]   Ibid.

al-Baghdadi that God declares in the Qur'an, "My mercy embraces all things" (7:156). To act without mercy or compassion, thus, contravenes the ethical order of Islam as well as the Prophetic praxis (*Sunna*) of Muhammad, who is in the Qur'an referred to as a "Mercy unto all the beings" (2:115).

In addition, the "Open Letter" does, as one would expect, demur at the Caliphal proclamation of enslaving of prisoners as Islamic. Indeed, it reiterates that the normative *Sunna* is the freeing of slaves. In angry phrases, it assails al-Baghdadi for reintroducing the abomination of slavery:

> After a century of Muslim consensus on the prohibition of slavery, you have violated this […] You have resuscitated something that the Shari'ah has worked tireless to undo and has been considered forbidden by consensus for over a century. Indeed, all the Muslim countries in the world are signatories of anti-slavery conventions.[47]

It is, of course, no secret that when Islam emerged in 7th-century Arabia, slavery was rampant (as was then the case in most other parts of the world, including in Europe). Islamic scholars, as well as non-Muslim scholars of Islam, have however argued that Islam, while providing for a new brotherhood of faith across social divides, only reluctantly tolerated slavery as a temporary measure as its complete abolition was not immediately possible. Instead, slaves were immediately given rights and sources of enslaving were limited or abolished.[48] The 1990 Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam, sponsored by the then Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), although far from a perfect expression of the Islamic concept of rights, unanimously declared that slavery is in contravention of the Islamic notion of human rights. It also explicitly proscribes confiscation and eviction of non-Muslims from their residences.

Conscripts to the ICS are rarely well-versed in Islamic ethics or law, nor indeed is Islam the motive (as opposed to the motif). In particular, the recruits from the West are "angry, or even bored, young men in search of a call to arms and a thrilling cause."[49] In July 2014 it occasioned much commentary when it appeared that two young British jihadists, Mohammad Nahin Ahmad and Yusuf Zubair Sarwar, had bought the novice title *Islam for Dummies,* prior to travelling to Syria to join Islamist rebels.[50] Lacking, thus, religious literacy and often religious practice, the new jihadist generation is driven not by faith but by emotion, not by ethics but by radical disaffect.

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[47] Ibid.

[48] See for instance the influential Victorian era work, first published 1891, by Syed Ameer Ali, *The Spirit of Islam: A History of the Evolution and Ideals of Islam with a Life of the Prophet* (Lahore: Islamic Book Service, 1989). W. Montgomery Watt provides another sympathetic reading in *Muhammad at Medina* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956), specifically p. 296.

[49] Mehdi Hasan, "How Islamic is the Islamic State," *New Statesman*, 10 March 2015.

[50] Martin Robinson, "British terrorists from Birmingham bought 'Islam for Dummies' before travelling to Syria to join rebel fighters in jihad," *Daily Mail*, 8 July 2014.

While all religious authorities, Sunni and Shi'i alike, agree on the rejection of the ICS as a form of monumental misguidance, few are willing to go as far as to declare them disbelievers. Professor Bernard Haykel of Princeton University explains the reason as follows, "Some Muslims are reticent to engage in hereticization [sic] of ISIS because they feel that in doing so they would be doing what ISIS is doing."[51] More technically, the reason for such juristic reticence lies in the classical principles of anathematization in Islam, which state, as we have seen above, that a Muslim does not become a disbeliever on the grounds of ill-deeds alone which rather render him as one embroiled in sin (*ma'siya*) or even transgression (*fisq*), from which he must repent. In other words, the boundaries between sinfulness and unfaithfulness are strictly upheld. On this ground, the ICS appears immune from the charge that they have deviated from the canon to such an extent that they have left the pale of Islam altogether.

One notable exception is Dr Muhammad Tahir ul-Qadri, the Chancellor of the Minhaj-ul-Quran University in Lahore and patron of a worldwide orthodox Sufi movement represented in no less than 80 countries. Relying on the juristic principle that the perversion of the Shari'a—such that the proscribed is prescribed and the prescribed is proscribed—is not only a sin but tantamount to disbelief (*kufr*), his 500-page *Fatwa on Terrorism and Suicide Bombings* opens up the possibility to conceive of the ICS, at least its rank-and-file, as non-Muslim.[52] He argues that if the ICS commits violations of the Shari'a (such as indiscriminate killing) under the proclamation that it a holy act, they have corrupted the sacred law and are therefore outside the fold of Islam. If they commit the same act, citing political reasons, vengeance or admitting to it as a transgression, they shall remain Muslim. Although grounded in a reading of the classical principles, Dr Qadri's opinion is not widely shared, but it may signal the beginning of a more radical assertion on the part of traditional scholars of Islam.

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[51] Quoted in Jack Jenkins, "What the Atlantic left out about ISIS according to its own expert," *Think Progress*, 20 February 2015: http://thinkprogress.org/world/2015/02/20/3625446/atlantic-left-isis-conversation-bernard-haykel/. The awkward term "hereticization" is, perhaps, not a precise rendition of the Arabic *takfir*. The latter entails the promulgation of a subject's status as outright disbeliever (*kafir*), not as heretic (*mubtadi*) alone. Hence, the term in English would be excommunication, even as we need to recognize that this refers not to a church-structure but a more open field of individualized theological and juristic authorities.

[52] Muhammad Tahir-ul Qadri, *Fatwa on Terrorism and Suicide Bombings* (London: Minhaj-ul-Quran International, 2010).

His second principal characterization of the jihadi movement as a form of *Kharijism*, however, has more resonance in the popular portrayals of the ICS. The Kharijis (lit. "the seceders") was a group of seventh-century schismatics in Caliphal history who in their violent opposition to the religious and political authorities set the precedent for the emergence of unyielding claimants to the status of "true believer-*cum*-lone warrior." As a paradigm, the Kharijis did not die out but continued, at intervals, to haunted Islamicate theo-politics ever since. Amid the contestations of rightful, or righteous, normativity, the Shari'a itself became the ontological battle-ground between those who, anarchically, arrogated to themselves privileged access to the divine mind—absent both intellectual structures and ethical strictures—and those who instead sought to guard the frontiers of canonical law by developing an elaborate apparatus of specialized knowledge, the transmission of which required rigorous study and, to be certain, accreditation. As a minority without complexes, the former not only stood outside of the formalization of the methodological premises and principles (*usūl*) that came to provide the nuclei of scholastic pursuits in matters of law, but also seceded from the resultant body of sacred injunctions (*ahkām al-shar'i*) that derived from the application of such principles. Thus, the *kharijis* were not only renegades (*ahl al-baghy*) but their revolt and resistance relied on a deliberate challenge to the canon, such that even the Prophet and the very closest of his Companions—who became archetypes of ascetic piety (*taqwa*) and Islamic chivalry (*futuwwa*)—did not escape rebuke or rebellion at their hands.

In Muslim heresiography, classic and modern, they were identified with "extremism," for, in Dr Qadri's words, "theirs was a violent movement that was against dialogue and peaceful settlement of disputes."[53] Citing early exegetical works, Dr Qadri argues that numerous Quranic verses, including the ones referring to "those who rejected faith after believing" (3:106) and "those with deviation in their hearts" (3:7), are revelations about the Kharijis that, by extension, would apply to the Islamic Caliphal State.

In what appears to be an addendum, the "Open Letter" instead relates a striking historical narration, reportedly dating from the fourth Caliph, Ali ibn Abi Talib (r. 656-61 CE), who is also considered the first of imams in Shi'ism. Seeking to establish its applicability to the ICS, the saying is quoted at length:

> When you see the black flags, remain where you are [...] There shall appear a feeble insignificant folk. Their hearts will be like fragments of iron. They will be people of the state [*ahl al-dawla*]. They will fulfil neither covenant nor agreement. They will call to the truth, but they shall not be people of the truth. Their names will be parental attributions, and their aliases will be derived from locations. Their hair

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[53] Ibid, p. 271.

will be free-flowing like that of women. This situation will remain until they differ among themselves.[54]

Unsurprisingly, the authors of the letter identify the "*dawla*" referred to in the prophecy with the ICS; the black flags with the trademark ICS standard; and the unfulfilment of covenants with the breach of international conventions and agreements with the local tribes (such as the August 2014 massacre of the Sunni She'itat tribe in Syria). The personal characteristics spoken of in the ancient text too are pointed out to have an uncanny resemblance with the ICS cadre: they use adopted names with parental attributes (Abu Bakr, Abu Ayman, Abu Muslim, Abu Ahmad, Abu Ali, Abu Fatima etc.) and locational aliases (al-Baghdadi, al-Zarqawi, al-Anbari, al-Turkmani, al-Sini etc.) and many do indeed sport free-flowing hair styles. In having identified ancient prophecies that delegitimize the ICS, the authors seek to not only strip the ICS of its religious legitimacy but to portray them as historical enemies of Islam.

Concluding Remarks: Beyond the Religious

Although "Islam" is rhetorically implicated in the self-portrayal and discursive constructions of the *soi-disant* Islamic Caliphal State, historical and normative Islam can be exonerated from its crimes. As illustrated in the authoritative responses by Islamic learned institutions covered in this article, ICS claims to Islamic orthodoxy are belied by its heterodox opposition to centuries of Sunni Islam's normative tradition, pertaining to theology, exegesis as well as jurisprudence. Palpable in all its brutality towards fellow Muslims, the Islamic Caliphal State has declared war with the historical reality of Islam itself, even prior to any engagement with the West as a spatio-temporal entity or the Judeao-Christian faith tradition as a civilization.

Although initiated as a process of thinking about parsimonious, yet non-simplistic, analytic categories by which to explain the intellectual history of the ICS in relation to Islamdom at large, the present paper has sought to make a genuine contribution to the literature. It has argued that the Islamic Caliphal State is best understood as a political cult (of empowerment), embedded in a political subculture (of Jihadism), deriving from a sectarian identity (of Salafism). As discussed above, the sectarian aspect relates to its treatment of both text and canon, its view of the majority of Muslims as errant, and its self-ascription as the (sole) representation of "true believers." The subculture, visible so clearly in a myriad of cyberspace expressions, entails a resistance to the crass commercialism and perceived materialism of Western society, amid which the Romantic

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[54] "Open Letter to al-Baghdadi," Op. cit., p. 26, with slight modifications in the translation for reasons of clarity. The same narration is discussed verbally by the former Grand-Mufti of Egypt, Ali Jumua, in his condemnation of the Islamic Caliphal State: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ay3RtCROE1k. Likewise, the charismatic American scholar of Islam Hamza Yusuf made reference to the same in a sermon condemning the "not-so-Islamic State": https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8xejllcFkMA.

utopianism of an anti-bourgeois counterculture is alluring. Admixed with a sense of horse-back adventurism in far-away lands that was possible only in centuries bygone, the liberal lack of absolutism meets a contempt for conformity in today's Jihadist youth rebellion. And, finally, the emergence of a stratified ideological entity—now a polity—that redeems the ill-fortunes of history and re-establishes religio-political virtuosity expresses itself as the divine right of Caliphs. Unlike the faith community, the ICS community is bound together not by devotion to God but to the group. For counter-terrorism purposes, it follows, therefore, the strategies of awareness and engagement that have been deployed in respect to anti-cult programmes remain of value, particularly such notions as deprogramming, exit counselling, and familial-cum-societal awareness.

But social scientists as well as historians of political thought also insist that ideas and identities rarely emerge out of a social vacuum but rather link to and seek legitimization from responses to historical contingencies. The political cult remains political at heart and cultic only in form. While there is nothing predetermined in Islam that would lead to the Islamic Caliphal State, we must remain cognizant of the contingent historical factors that have given rise to it. Hence, even as the distinction is drawn too sharply in contemporary social analysis—courtesy of the now-dominant secularization thesis[55]—we need to consider precisely political conditions in addition to the discursively religious in order to come to terms with the genealogy of the ICS. Indeed, underneath the religious garb lie distinct (geo)political aspects that are simultaneously causal, contextual and central for resolution. The unwelcome Western role in the collapse of Iraq as a functioning state, the subsequent maelstrom of interdenominational infighting in an increasingly unrestrained scramble for resources, the disenfranchisement of the Sunni community in both Iraq and Syria, the added turmoil of the post-Arab Spring uprisings in the latter, combined with a century-long sense of dispossession and marginalization, have made for real grievances. Added to these are tangible structures pertaining to uneven development and limited social mobility, caused in part by the rentier or dependency economies of the region, the limited provision of education and healthcare, and the continued lack of reforms and representation even after the false start of the Arab Spring. None of these issues are particularly "Islamic" in genesis, even if they can become Islamized in the identity politics of resistance. Violent conditions therefore can lead to violent interpretations of religion. Indeed, sometimes the sense of trauma can weigh so heavily, it almost becomes eschatological: Bad times can only end with the end of times.

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[55]   For a seminal discussion of the secularization thesis, see Jose Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

If we, as we must, uphold the normativity of religious frames, the term "Islamic" bears an insistent relation to the professed ideals of the faith tradition, based in turn on its scriptural and ethical teachings. Not all that Muslims do is in conformity with Islamic precepts, even when ostensibly done under the guise of religion. Commentators—whether from academic, policy-making, or journalistic backgrounds—who speak of "Islamic terrorism" seek to create an impression that a certain strand of terrorism is either generated or otherwise authorized by Islam. In the contest for symbolic orders that is currently playing out between protagonists of the abomination that is the Islamic Caliphal State and the majority of the Muslim world community, the generative impact of political (dis)order must not be forgotten.

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Religion, Youth and the Effects of ISIS Narratives on Radicalisation in the West

Akil N. Awan

INTRODUCTION

In June 2014, the jihadist group ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) announced the re-establishment of a Caliphate – the religio-political entity that had historically governed vast swathes of the Islamic world, but which in this new incarnation would straddle large parts of Syria and Iraq. This ominous proclamation was presaged by images of convoys of heavily armed ISIS fighters bearing their infamous black banners, as they swept through Northeastern Syria into Northern Iraq, symbolically dismantling the colonial-era Sykes-Picot boundaries along the way. As validation of this new de facto polity, ISIS truncated its name to simply IS – the Islamic State, removing any lingering allegiance to the nation states from which it was forged; those entities it perceived to be illegitimate and moribund legacies of the old imperial world order. Moreover, evincing global pretensions, IS declared that it was now incumbent on all Muslims worldwide to swear fealty to their new religio-political leader, the self-aggrandising Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, or Caliph Ibrahim, the new regal moniker he demanded to be addressed as.

Unsurprisingly, the backlash from within the Islamic world against this flagrant usurpation of power and authority has been overwhelmingly negative, with the vast majority rejecting any such claim to legitimacy. Nevertheless, the resurrection of even a notional Caliphate has resonated with a small but significant minority of Muslims, leading to many thousands of young men, in search of a cause, flocking to the IS banner. Indeed, IS has drawn foreigners from every corner of the globe, willing to fight and die for its nascent Caliphate. Some estimates place the number of foreign fighters within ISIS at around 20,000 individuals, originating from no less than 81 different countries; a truly globalized mobilization on an epic scale.[1]

As realization gradually dawns upon the international community of the grave consequences for both state and society should citizens decide to take up arms with brutal and extreme outfits like ISIS, the international community has scrambled to instate

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[1] ICSR (2015), "Foreign fighter total in Syria/Iraq now exceeds 20,000; surpasses Afghanistan conflict in the 1980s", *ICSR Insight*, 26/01/2015, http://icsr.info/2015/01/foreign-fighter-total-syriairaq-now-exceeds-20000-surpasses-afghanistan-conflict-1980s/.

strategies for dealing with this worrying recruitment of fighters. Most prominently, in September 2014, US President Barack Obama chaired a special meeting of the UN Security Council in which he asked member states to pass a resolution establishing an international legal framework to help prevent the recruitment and transport of would-be foreign fighters. As expected, United Nations Security Council Resolution 2178 on Foreign Terrorist Fighters passed unanimously.[2]

Many states have shown grave concern over their own citizens joining IS, but understandably, also over the dangers inherent in the inevitable influx of returnees once the conflict is over. Fighters returning from the frontlines, brutalized by the ravages of war and potentially suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, may prove incapable of easily slipping back into their respective host societies. More ominously, some will also have engaged in horrific sectarian violence or egregious human rights violations that have become hallmarks of the conflict. The social media accounts of some Western jihadists, tweeting images of grisly executions and selfies with severed heads, or the prominence of individuals like Jihadi John, the Briton who was shown brutally beheading American and British hostages, is testament to the barbarity many fighters have not just been immersed within, but have positively relished. Naturally, these revelations will prove all the more troubling should these men choose to return home. Indeed, a small minority may have already brought violence back with them, as recent examples have shown. Mehdi Nemmouche carried out sadistic violence in Syria, before returning to Belgium, where he is now the prime suspect in an anti-Semitic attack on a Jewish museum in Belgium that left four people dead in May.[3] Similarly, evidence suggest Cherif Kouachi, responsible for the *Charlie Hebdo* attack, received training with terrorist groups in both Yemen and Syria before returning to his native France.[4]

This attendant surge in terrorist activity amongst Western jihadists has understandably caused great concern in their host countries, as the first signs of foreign fighter blowback bring the violence of Raqqa, Homs, and Mosul to the streets of London, Brussels, Paris and New York. Potential solutions have ranged from revoking citizenship, exclusion and prosecution, to deradicalization and rehabilitation, with many Western states showing uncertainty over precisely how they should deal with their errant sons, who choose to return home once the conflict has lost its glamour and appeal. However, these measures are, by their very nature, reactive, dealing with the consequences instead of addressing the underlying root causes of the problem. Rather, in order to stem the flow of willing young recruits to IS, we must understand and address the appeal that IS holds for young impressionable men in Western societies. Why does the narrative of groups like IS and Al-Qaeda appear to resonate with them? This

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[2] http://www.un.org/press/en/2014/sc11580.doc.htm.

[3] http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/11080079/Brussels-museum-shooting-suspect-beheaded-baby.html.

[4] http://edition.cnn.com/2015/01/11/europe/france-terror-suspects-connection/.

paper attempts to answer precisely these questions by providing a fuller, more nuanced understanding of some of the motivations for joining IS.

What is the Narrative?

At the heart of IS's appeal is the alluring simplicity of the jihadist narrative, which compels Muslim audiences to view contemporary conflicts through the prism of a wider historical global attack on Islam and Muslims by a belligerent "Zionist-Crusader Alliance", and in response to which the jihadists claim to serve as the sole and crucial vanguard.[5] This narrative, as many commentators have recognised, has remained re-markably coherent and consistent over time.[6] It is not difficult to see why Bin Laden's emphatic challenges to the Ummah in the past, to recognise the assault upon their faith, lands, and people, and to retaliate in kind, might strike powerful emotional chords with Muslim audiences everywhere. Indeed, the hundreds of individuals who have heeded Bin Laden's fervent calls thus far are surely testament to the alluring potency of this narrative. Add to that heady mix IS's own addendum to that narrative, claiming that the Caliphate has now been restored, thereby restoring glory and honour to the downtrod-den Muslims once again. The propagandists of the IS claim that it is therefore now incumbent on every Muslim to make *hijrah*, or emigrate to the new caliphate, to live under Islamic sovereignty and to help defend, and ultimately restore the state to its long-lost glory.

However, the cogence and coherence of IS's narrative, in and of itself, is not suf-ficient to account for the rise of the foreign fighter phenomenon, particularly amongst young Muslims in the Western diaspora. One way of conceptualising this problem is to view the narrative as one of the important pull factors that offers something – it is the appeal, but the individual's context and their personal circumstances are central to whether or not this narrative resonates on an individual level. The narrative has to find fertile ground to take root. And of course, we have to consider the role of individual agency here too. Very few individuals whose context and circumstances intersect with a resonant narrative become de facto jihadists automatons. Consequently, it is likely a combination or interplay of these elements that ultimately manifest as a desire to join IS, or a move towards violent extremism.

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[5] Akil N. Awan, "Jihadi Ideology in the New Media Environment," in *Contextualising Jihadi Thought*, ed. Jeevan Deol and Zaheer Kazmi (London: Hurst & Co, 2012).

[6] Michael Scheuer, *Imperial Hubris: Why the West Is Losing the War on Terror* (Washington D.C.; Poole: Potomac; Chris Lloyd [distributor], 2008); Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11*, 1. Vintage Books ed, National Bestseller (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 2007).

Reconfiguring Identities

To Western audiences inured to depictions of jihadists as either evil, bloodthirsty savages or deranged, religious zealots,[7] there must be something inherently incongruous and deeply unsettling about recognising the essentially altruistic nature behind the actions of many jihadists. However, as discomfiting as this revelation may be, it is nevertheless important to recognise that many individuals that gravitate towards jihadism often do so for largely selfless reasons, being sincerely compassionate to those they see themselves as helping.[8] Indeed, empathy for fellow Muslims *inculcate many potential radical Islamists with a profound sense of duty and justice, which finds effective expression through the conduit of jihadism.*

Take for example the case of Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, a Nigerian graduate of University College London, who failed to detonate explosive-lined underwear on a trans-Atlantic flight in 2009. He justified his actions to US prosecutors by stating,

> I carried with me an explosive device onto Northwest 253, again, to avenge the killing of my innocent Muslim brothers and sisters by the U.S...to save the lives of innocent Muslims.[9]

Shahzad Tanweer – one of the 7/7 bombers, for example, attempted to justify his actions by pointing to British tacit support for injustices perpetrated against his "fictive kin":[10]

> To the non-Muslims of Britain you may wonder what you have done to deserve this. You have those who have voted in your government who in turn have and still continue to this day continue to oppress our mothers, children, brothers and sisters from the east to the west in Palestine...Iraq and Chechnya. Your government has openly supported the genocide of over 50,000 innocent Muslims....You will never experience peace until our children in Palestine, our mothers and sisters in Kashmir, our brothers in Afghanistan and Iraq live in peace....Our blood flows across the earth, Muslim blood has become cheap Better [sic] those who will avenge the blood of our children in Palestine and the rapes and massacres of our sisters in Kashmir.[11]

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[7] For more on this general characterisation, see Scott Atran, "The Moral Logic and Growth of Suicide Terrorism," *The Washington Quarterly* 29, no. 2 (2006): 127–47, doi:10.1162/wash.2006.29.2.127; Scott Atran, "Soft Power and the Psychology of Suicide Bombing," *Global Terrorism Analysis* 2, no. 11 (2004).

[8] Atran, "The Moral Logic and Growth of Suicide Terrorism."

[9] Detroit Free Press, "Transcript: Read Abdulmutallab's Statement on Guilty Plea", *Detroit Free Press*, October 12, 2011.

[10] This term is borrowed from S. Atran, "Genesis of Suicide Terrorism," *Science* 299, no. 5612 (March 7, 2003): 1534, doi:10.1126/science.1078854.

[11] Available at http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2006/oct/15/terrorism.alqaida1.

Similarly, Mohammed Siddique Khan, in his posthumously released "martyrdom" testament, repeatedly invoked a communal identity in which he identified the subjugation of *his community* as being principal amongst his grievances:

> Your democratically elected governments continuously perpetuate atrocities against my people all over the world. And your support of them makes you directly responsible, just as I am directly responsible for protecting and avenging my Muslim brothers and sisters. Until we feel security, you will be our targets. And until you stop the bombing, gassing, imprisonment and torture of my people we will not stop this fight.[12]

We may dispute the notion that Western jihadists comfortably ensconced within the West hail from "occupied", "oppressed" or "subjugated" communities; however, to do so would be to ignore the communal and supra-national nature of radical Islamist discourse, and the widely held perceptions of Western domination and hegemony in the Muslim world more broadly. Indeed, one of the cornerstones of jihadist discourse has been the rejection of a more parochial conceptualisation of community that is predicated upon the traditional ambits of ethnicity or nationalism, in favour of a global community of belief instead. As an example of the championing of this global community of belief and purpose – the *ummah* – the *Global Islamic Media Front*, a prominent media organ of Al-Qaeda, stated in 2005, "The [battle]front does not belong to anyone. It is the property of all zealous Muslims and knows no geographical boundaries".[13]

Clearly it is this radically reformulated global community of belief that many incipient jihadists clearly see themselves as identifying with, first and foremost. But how do we explain this confusing dislocation and melodramatic sense of duty to a nebulous and disparate body of peoples ("my Muslim brothers and sisters", "our children in Palestine", "our mothers and sisters in Kashmir"), who ultimately become the object of their altruistic sacrifice. This is despite the fact they often have little direct connection to, or identification with them – in terms of ethnicity, nationality, language, culture or customs, to name but a few salient markers of identity. This attitude is all the more perplexing when juxtaposed against the feelings of indifference and open hostility displayed towards their victims, with whom they often *do* actually share many facets of their identity. And this should not simply be dismissed as a type of post hoc rhetoric used to retrospectively justify actions. Rather, as the examples of at least the initial influx of foreign fighters to Syria have shown, the profession of humanitarian grounds is often genuinely expressed. How then do we explain this appeal?

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[12]   Available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4206800.stm.

[13]   Cited in Akil N. Awan, "Antecedents of Islamic Political Radicalism Among Muslim Communities in Europe," *PS: Political Science & Politics* 41, no. 01 (2008): 222, doi:10.1017/S1049096508080013.

This disconcertingly misplaced identification can be partially explained through a process I describe elsewhere as *dual cultural alterity*.[14] Essentially a double alienation or double sense of otherness that results in a staunch repudiation of, or at least a distinct lack of identification with, both *minority* (ethnic or parental) culture, and *majority* (mainstream or host society) culture, as a result of being unable or unwilling to fulfil either group's normative expectations, and thus is likely to inspire feelings of uprootedness and lack of belonging.

Minority culture may be relegated to obsolescence for a number of reasons including the imposition of conservative socio-sexual mores; a profound sense of alienation from one's family; and the presence of cultural power structures, which can have the ostensive effect of divesting youth of any real tangible control over their own lives.[15]

The disenchantment with majority culture, on the other hand, is less clear cut, particularly as many jihadists, by virtue of being raised in a pervasively Western environment and having imbibed many of its values and cultural norms, display a remarkably easy immersion into majority culture (particular popular, mainstream youth culture) prior to their radicalisation. However, clearly this comfortable embedment is disrupted at some point and gradually superseded by disillusionment with majority culture, as a result of perceptions of hedonism, consumerism, racism, inequality and the general imposition of conflicting core value systems from the "host" society, which may render the individual unwilling or unable to perpetuate assimilation into the predominant paradigm.

Cherif Kouachi, one of the gunmen in the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks in Paris, was described by his lawyer in 2005, as "a confused chameleon",[16] aptly summing up the cultural schizophrenia that can be borne out of a *dual cultural alterity.*

Examining identity through the lens of self-categorization theory[17] shows that the self may be defined at different levels of abstraction depending upon differing circumstances; at times it may be in terms of individual uniqueness, whilst at others, in terms of specific group membership. The salience of a communal identity, for example, may arise during periods of perceived group crisis or threat. For incipient jihadists these flashpoints may have been evoked by a range of contemporary events, including the Iraq war and the wider Global War on Terror; the new securitized landscape that places

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[14] Akil N. Awan, "Transitional Religiosity Experiences: Contextual Disjuncture and Islamic Political Radicalism," in *Islamic Political Radicalism: A European Comparative Perspective*, ed. Tahir Abbas (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 219.

[15] Awan 217; Home Office Working Groups, *Preventing Extremism Together* (London: Home Office, 2005), 15.

[16] http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/08/world/two-brothers-suspected-in-killings-were-known-to-french-intelligence-services.html.

[17] John C. Turner, *Rediscovering the Social Group: A Self-Categorization Theory* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988); Penelope J. Oakes, Stereotyping and Social Reality (Oxford, UK; Cambridge, Mass., USA: Blackwell, 1994).

inordinate scrutiny on Muslim organisations and institutions, or profiles young Muslim men; the banning of the veil and other European sartorial restrictions on Muslim women; the provocative publication of Danish and French cartoons of Muhammad deemed offensive to Muslims; and the resurgence of the Far Right and its convergence with the rise in Islamophobia in the US and Western Europe more generally.[18] In some scenarios, this new communal identity provides an emphatic rejoinder to the experiences of dislocation and lack of belonging in the West, and by extension the identity offered by their own society, which these individuals feel has already rejected them anyway.[19]

Naturally these sorts of confused and melodramatic crises of identity and belonging can prove incredibly useful for jihadist recruiters, as they can easily be co-opted by and yoked to the jihadists' utopian narrative of a global fraternity or community of believers – the Ummah – which does not recognise colour, race or nationality, and claims to be equally besieged from all sides. It is this radical interpretation of the religious community of believers then that becomes the sole locus of identity and belonging. Consequently, in the absence of an appealing cultural paradigm from either parents or mainstream society, the individual simply resorts to a cultural entrenchment that assumes a religious hue by default, transforming religion, from religion per se, into the principal anchor of identity.

Those who buy into this identity reconfiguration narrative should be thought of as the "born again" variety of believer. They have much in common with religious converts found in all faiths. Indeed, it is no accident that Islamic converts are disproportionately represented among jihadists. Recent terrorist attacks carried out in Ottawa, Quebec, and New York were the work of recent converts to Islam, as was the hostage crisis in the kosher supermarket in Paris that played out alongside the siege that led to the death of the Kouachi brothers. With little previous religious socialization, no effective spiritual counterweight in their immediate circles, and a desperate desire to prove their religious credentials, the born again variety are far more likely to accept totalitarian visions of Islam, with the proverbial zeal of the converted.

Consequently, religion not only provides an emphatic rejoinder to Western identity, but is also interpreted *de novo*, without the perceived cultural accretions of the Islam associated with their parental or ethnic identity, thereby constructing a legitimate identity outside both minority and majority cultures. Take for instance the case of Umar Farouk Abdulmuttalab, who wrote in the final text messages to his devout father back in Nigeria, "I've found a new religion, the real Islam"; "You should just forget about me, I'm never coming back"; "Please forgive me. I will no longer be in touch with you"; and "Forgive me for any wrongdoing, I am no longer your child."[20] Olivier Roy argues

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[18] Peter Gottschalk, *Islamophobia: Making Muslims the Enemy* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008).

[19] Awan, "Transitional Religiosity Experiences: Contextual Disjuncture and Islamic Political Radicalism," 219.

[20] Adam Nossiter, "Lonely Trek to Radicalism for Terror Suspect," *The New York Times*, January 16, 2010.

that globalized radical Islam is particularly attractive to diasporic Muslims precisely because it legitimises their sense of deculturation and uprootedness by refusing to identify Islam with the pristine cultures of their parents, pointing to a strong correlation between deculturation and religious reformulation.[21]

Religious Motivations and Rhetoric

This leads us on very usefully to one of the enduring myths that has surrounded jihadists for many years – the ascendancy of religious motivations over other more "worldly" concerns – and it is easy to understand why this might be the case. Many of these individuals themselves employ starkly religious language, and invoke religious texts that promise "other-worldly" rewards as compensation for "this-worldly" sacrifice, including, amongst other things, the guarantee of eternal Paradise, and most famously, the lascivious offering of 72 heavenly virgins.[22]

Take, for example, Shahzad Tanweer, who had earlier claimed to be motivated by the West's injustices against his community, but who nevertheless invokes the "promise" of Paradise as being central to his rationale:

> We are 100 per cent committed to the cause of Islam, we love death the way you love life….As for you who have been affected by this reminder give your lives for Allah's cause. For in truth this is the best transaction as Allah…says: "Better that Allah has chosen to deliver their lives and their properties for the price that they should be the paradise"….Then rejoice in the life in which you have concluded that is the supreme success.[23]

Muhammad Siddique Khan also tempers his earlier altruistic but "secular" motives by introducing a sacred dimension to his rationale:

> I and thousands like me are forsaking everything for what we believe. Our driving motivation doesn't come from tangible commodities that this world has to offer…. With this I leave you to make up your own minds and I ask you to make dua to Allah almighty to accept the work from me and my brothers and enter us into gardens of paradise.[24]

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[21] Olivier Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

[22] See, for example, Sunan A-Tirmidhi (1663) and Sunan Ibn Majah (2799).

[23] Available at http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2006/oct/15/terrorism.alqaida1.

[24] http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4206800.stm.

Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab presents a similarly curious mix of secular and sacred motives, by first providing a very careful reasoning of his participation in jihad as constituting not only a religious duty but a virtuous deed:

> In late 2009, in fulfilment of a religious obligation, I decided to participate in jihad against the United States. The Koran obliges every able Muslim to participate in jihad and fight in the way of Allah, those who fight you….Participation in jihad against the United States [sic] is considered among the most virtuous of deeds in Islam and is highly encouraged in the Koran….If you laugh at us now, we will laugh at you later in this life and on the day of judgement by God's will, and our final call is all praise to Allah, the lord of the universe, Allahu Akbar.[25]

Consequently, it becomes extremely difficult, if not impossible, to delineate that which is genuinely "religious" from other more secular factors, particularly if all we have to base this on is the overtly sanctified and highly stylised discourse of the individuals themselves. Thus, whilst we must give credence to their stated *sacred* intentions, and their own attribution of meaning to their actions, we must crucially also be cognisant of the post hoc attribution of meaning and validation to these acts.[26] To put it differently, religion may not provide the initial motive, but it does provide the motif or stamp of approval. Take the example of a young man who wants to go to Syria to fight for any reason that is *not* explicitly religious. It is not enough to just fight and even die like a jihadi; to be accepted by that community (and indeed not to end up beheaded as a member of a rival group), you need to walk, talk and behave like one of them too. The highly stylised genre of video "martyrdom testaments" suicide bombers record prior to their deaths are a very good example of this sort of conformity. It is no accident they all look and sound pretty much the same as they need to display certain religious tropes and conform to established archetypes for conferral of the status of martyr by the wider community.

One recent telling example of this sort of religiosity tacked on at the end is the case of Mohammed Ahmed and Yusuf Sarwar, two young British men from Birmingham who were jailed for travelling to Syria to join and fight alongside a jihadist group in 2013, in response to what they saw as their religious duty. But it was the reading material they purchased to accompany them on their trip, the books *Islam for Dummies* and *The Koran for Dummies*, which prove most revealing about their lack of religious literacy and motivation.[27] This characterisation appears to hold equally true for the violent men who attacked the *Charlie Hebdo* offices. The Kouachi brothers, as orphaned children of Algerian immigrants, were raised in foster care, and certainly not as pious

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[25] Detroit Free Press, "Transcript: Read Abdulmutallab's Statement on Guilty Plea."

[26] See also Anne Speckhard and Khapta Akhmedova, "The Making of a Martyr: Chechen Suicide Terrorism," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 29, no. 5 (2006): 25, doi:10.1080/10576100600698550.

[27] http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/dec/05/two-britons-jailed-13-years-joining-jihadi-group-syria.

Muslims. Rather, as the French newspaper *Libération* reported back in 2005, Cherif led a decidedly non-devout and hedonistic lifestyle, smoking marijuana, drinking alcohol, listening to Gangster-rap, and having numerous girlfriends. Indeed, during his trial in 2008 for helping to transport jihadist fighters from France to Iraq, Cherif's lawyer described his client as an "occasional Muslim."[28]

Now, this is not to exonerate religion in any sense. Religion has historically been responsible for a great deal of violence, and religious texts and doctrines often appear to condone death and destruction. However, unlike believers, academics tend to understand religion in epiphenomenal terms; as products of social, economic, political and other factors that offer solutions to something. So what does religion offer a solution to, in the case of Europe's jihadists?

Transforming Losers to Martyrs

In addition to the timely identity reconfiguration offered in the face of a dual cultural alterity, this particular form of religiosity also offers meaning and purpose in the lives of those who desperately lack it. It appears that for an increasing number of aspiring jihadists, the appeal of Al-Qaeda or Islamic State does not stem from altruistic identification with a community of victims, but rather results from an egoistical desire to overcome an unbearable ennui borne largely of underachievement. In these instances, the turn to jihadism serves as an emphatic rejection of the banality and monotonous inanity of daily life, providing, perhaps for the first time, a sense of being part of an elite group that compensates for the shortcomings of one's own trivial existence,[29] or as Sageman suggests, "martyrdom lifts them from their insignificance".[30]

Anthony Garcia, one of the failed 2004 "Bluewater bomb" plotters, appears to epitomise this motif. Garcia left school at the age of sixteen with few qualifications and no discernible ambitions; instead, peripatetically drifting from one menial job to another. Prior to his arrest, Garcia had been working nightshifts stacking shelves at a local supermarket, but spent much of his time daydreaming about becoming a jihadi fighter, with the jihadist fantasy clearly providing a form of escapism from the daily tedium and drudgery of his otherwise uneventful life.[31] Indeed, for others like Richard Reid, the "shoe bomber" who tried to destroy an Atlantic flight in mid-air in December

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[28] http://www.liberation.fr/societe/2005/02/21/un-ticket-pour-le-jihad_510275.

[29] Awan, "Transitional Religiosity Experiences: Contextual Disjuncture and Islamic Political Radicalism," 220; Martha Crenshaw, "Explaining Suicide Terrorism: A Review Essay," *Security Studies* 16, no. 1 (2007): 153.

[30] Marc Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 152.

[31] BBC News, "Profile: Anthony Garcia," April 30, 2007, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/6149798.stm.

of 2001, martyrdom offers not just an escape from underachievement, but also a life plagued by incarceration and petty crime.[32]

In the case of the Kouachi brothers, jihadism potentially offered a rejection of, and escape from, the banal and inane drudgery of daily life in French *banlieues*, which for many French Muslims is a heady mix of unemployment, crime, drugs, institutional racism and endemic cycles of poverty and disenfranchisement.

In direct contrast to these feelings of boredom, purposelessness and insignificance, the jihadists offer redemption through the image of the chivalrous warrior, with the individual recast as some sort of avenging hero. Following the *Charlie Hedbo* attack, Islamic State's official radio station praised the "jihadi *heroes* who had avenged the Prophet", validating the Kouachi brothers' transformation from petty criminals and nobodies into heroes of Islam.

It is only via the redemptive prism of the chivalrous jihadi warrior, through which he is recast as the community's champion as a result of his heroic sacrifice, that the individual then discerns a mechanism to reclaim agency, purpose, self-esteem and manhood. Muhammad Siddique Khan's martyrdom video emphatically refers to his coterie of martyrs as "real men", pointedly distinguishing them from the emasculated individuals who "stay at home".[33]

The appeal to the valiant holy warrior or chivalrous knight is a recurring trope in jihadist literature, and indeed it is no accident that Ayman al-Zawahiri's most important work is entitled *Knights Under the Prophet's Banner (Fursan Taht Rayah Al-Nabi)*,[34] shrewdly seeking to exploit traditional Muslim male sensitivities around chivalry, honour, shame and sacrifice. The astute framing of this loss of dignity as being some-how sinful offers up the prospect of redemption, and absolution through sacrifice and martyrdom.[35]

Muhammad Siddique Khan exemplifies the transformative power offered by the martyr's mask, undergoing the ready metamorphosis from children's learning mentor to heroic avenging soldier:

> I am directly responsible for protecting and avenging my Muslim brothers and sis-ters….And until you stop the bombing, gassing, imprisonment and torture of my people we will not stop this fight. We are at war and I am a soldier. Now you too will taste the reality of this situation.[36]

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[32]   BBC News, "Who Is Richard Reid?," December 28, 2001, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/1731568.stm.

[33]   Available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4206800.stm.

[34]   Ayman al-Zawahiri, *Fursan Taht Rayah Al-Nabi (Knights Under the Prophet's Banner)*, 2001, www.scribd.com/doc/6759609/ Knights-Under-the-Prophet-Banner.

[35]   Farhad Khosrokhavar, *Suicide Bombers: Allah's New Martyrs* (London: Pluto Press, 2005), 133.

[36]   Available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4206800.stm.

More recently, the Islamic State's propaganda machine has orchestrated a savvy and highly sophisticated media campaign, producing material that shrewdly seeks to exploit these tensions. Recent social media agitprop from IS included the telling phrases "Sometimes people with the worst pasts create the best futures" and "Why be a loser when you can be a martyr?"

Conclusion

As IS continues to draws young Muslim men from every corner of the globe to its nascent caliphate, it is clear that their broader jihadist narratives are continuing to resonate at some level, even with a small but significant minority of young men and women born and raised in the West. This significant exodus of foreign fighters from many European states will no doubt continue to haunt us long after the Islamic State meets its inevitable demise, through the inevitable foreign fighter blowback syndrome. If we are to address this pressing security issue of recruitment proactively, rather than simply attempting to deal with the returnees, it is important to not just understand what IS's appeal is, but also crucially to recognise that their narrative only resonates and has potency when it intersects with the very particular context and circumstances that some young Muslims in the West find themselves in today. The heady mix of increasing xenophobia and Islamophobia, alienation and cultural dislocation, socio-economic marginalisation, and political disenfranchisement that many young Muslims experience leads them to take solace in faux-religious identities proffered by welcoming jihadists. These new religious identities not only provide a sense of identification and belonging, but also serve as catalysts to transform young people's lives, lifting them from under-achievement, marginalisaton, criminality or simply just purposelessness and boredom, and in the process cast them as heroes, and champions of the new reconfigured community of believers. The Internet and attendant new media environment, which has become the principal platform for the dissemination and mediation of the culture and ideology of jihadism,[37] is also largely responsible for the increasing resonance of these IS narratives. It is in these cloistered yet highly immersive web 2.0 environments that jihadist propagandists rely on emotive imagery and other affective content to venerate the hero – not just through polished jihadist video montages, stirring devotional songs, and fawning hagiographies of martyrs; but also through appeals to videogames like *Call of Duty* and *Grand Theft Auto* and other popular culture references. These strategies are tailored towards the newer generation of young, diasporic, non-Arabic

[37] Akil N. Awan, "Virtual Jihadist Media: Function, Legitimacy and Radicalizing Efficacy," *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 10, no. 3 (August 1, 2007): 389–408.

speaking, digital natives,[38] and so it is inevitable that these young people will continue to contribute disproportionately to the jihadist demographic.[39]

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[38]   This term is adapted from Prensky, and by which I mean a generation of young people who, having been born and raised in an omnipresent digital world, are so comfortably immersed in this virtual environment that they no longer make significant distinctions between it and the "real" world. See also Marc Prensky, "Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants," *On the Horizon* 9, no. 5 (2001).

[39]   Awan, "Jihadi Ideology in the New Media Environment," 114. Akil N. Awan and Mina Al-Lami, "Al-Qa'ida's Virtual Crisis," *The RUSI Journal* 154, no. 1 (2009): 62, doi:10.1080/03071840902818605.

A Comparison between Ethnic-Driven and Religious-Driven Terrorism: A Study of PKK and IS in Turkey and their Future Prospects

Hüseyin Bagci and Hasan Hilmi Gullu

1. PKK

1.1. A Brief Past and Present

The ethnic-secessionist PKK, also known as Kurdish Workers' Party (Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan), terrorist organization was founded by Abdullah Öcalan on 26 November 1978 in a village called Fis within the province of Diyarbakir's Lice district as the continuation of two groups under the names of Apoists and Army of National Liberation that then ceased to exist (Özcan, 1999: 45).

PKK's first and foremost objective has been to establish an independent United Kurdistan in the regions of Turkey where the majority of people are of Kurdish origin. The group initially used to pursue this goal under a Marxist-Leninist ideology; however, within its historical development it has chosen to go smoothly with the cultural dynamics of the region and the changing landscape of international politics and adapted its ideology to the needs of conjuncture.

It first sought to fight for Kurdish people's cultural and social rights and freedoms, then to set up an autonomous Kurdish administration within Turkey brought together under the framework of "democratic confederalism". In the Middle East where nation states can no longer be sustained, the only convenient solution would be a pyramid-based organization of democratic confederalism (Öcalan, 2004: 28). PKK's ultimate goal is to free and unite the Kurdish people living separately in the four parts (Turkey, Iraq, Syria and Iran) of Greater Kurdistan and find for itself a passage to the Mediterranean Sea.

Since its first assaults on Turkish security forces in Eruh and Şemdinli on 15 August 1984, the PKK has been an armed rebellion movement and an active violent terrorist group. It has formed an unconventional warfare army that has been recruiting most of its militants from Turkey and has constantly battled against Turkish security forces using guerrilla tactics throughout the 1990s and early 2000s. Both sides conceded losses

of approximately 30,000 people and the financial damage was over USD100 billion. The leader of PKK, Abdullah Öcalan, had been delivered to Turkey after his apprehension in Nairobi by a US-Israel joint operation on 15 February 1999 (Halevy, 2008: 304) and sentenced to life in a remote island called Imrali in the Sea of Marmara.

Since the Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to power on 14 August 2001, a negotiation process with the representing political party affiliated with PKK have begun, which later on pioneered the secret direct negotiations with the leader(s) of PKK. As of today, after Öcalan's recent "farewell to arms" call to the PKK, the negotiation process, also known as "resolution process", reached its critical threshold within both parties of whether to go forward and resolve the conflict or to take a sharp turn to the clashes of the 1990s.

1.2. Profile of PKK and the Young Recruits – Data from Quantitative Researches

If we re-visit the researches conducted among the members (most of the subjects were prisoners, runaways or confirmed deads) we would be able to get more or less a profile of PKK militants as regards the militants' average age, age of participation, average age of death and some other demographic data. However, we are bound by the constraint of the limited number of quantitative studies done in Turkey among the members of PKK.

The first published research that revealed quantitative data was ordered by the Turkish National Council and conducted by a think tank, KÖK Social and Strategic Research Foundation, between the years 1994-1996. Among 1,003 subjects who were interviewed in several prisons, the majority age range of PKK militants was found to be between 18-27 years (Özönder, 1997: 221). The study revealed that 70.8% of the militants were single, 25% married and 7% widowed. As to the educational levels of the members of the PKK, the research showed that 47.2% of the militants were elementary school graduates, 12.3% were secondary school graduates, 14.4% were high school graduates, and only 4.65% had college degrees. 10.2% were illiterate, and 7.4% did not possess any educational background but were, however, literate (Özönder, 1997: 228). The same research showed that 68% of the militants were born in rural villages (Şehirli, 2000: 379-384). From these findings, it would be an educated guess to generalize the cadre of PKK in 1990s as uneducated country people and the majority of the militants as elementary school graduates. We can also deduce from the study that the participation level decreases as the educational level goes higher.

According to the research which was done by the Counterterrorism Department of the Turkish Police in the beginning of 2000, remarkably, 54% of the militants were between the ages of 14-25 (Alkan, 2002: 114). This research shows us that a steep decrease in the average age had taken place in six years, which reduced the lower limit of average age from 18 to 14 years and the upper limit from 27 to 25 years.

Another research by the Turkish Police's Psychological Operations Department indicates the average time the militants spent within PKK ranks before getting killed. 67.8% of the militants of PKK were killed in action within the first 4 years of their

participation. 46.5% were killed in the first 0-2 years, 21.3% were killed in 2-4 years, 21.8% were killed in 4-8 years and only 9% survived more than 8 years (Çitlioğlu, 2008: 134). This very remarkable drop-out data shows us how desperately the PKK needs fresh recruits every year. This is why PKK strives very hard to be able to recruit more young and preferably under-aged militants.

One other research indicates the average age of PKK militants as 18.93 years. The study found out that 23.7% of the militants were between the ages of 12-15, 30.9% of the militants were between 16-18, and 28.9% were between 19-25. This remarkable data also verifies that the majority of the PKK militants were barely 18 years old. The study also found out that 88.7% of the militants were male and 11.3% were female. As to the educational levels, the study reveals that 6.2% of the militants were illiterate, 1% literate with no school background, 12.4% left the education system at the elementary level, 26.8% graduated from elementary school, 12.4% left at the secondary school level, 7.2% graduated from secondary school, 6.2% left at the high school level, 9.3% graduated from high school, 6.2% left at the college level, and 2.1% graduated from college. The data also indicates 90.7% of the members as single and just 9.3% married. When we study the professional background of the PKK militants, the research shows us that 35.1% of them were unemployed, 38.2% were workers, 15.5% students, 8.3% farmers and 1% medical doctors before joining PKK. The study also shows that 58% of the militants came from a family with the number of children between 6-14 (Cantekin, 2006: 116-121). According to the report by the Human Rights Commission of Turkish Parliament (2012), 78% of PKK's recruits did not have a proper job.

When we compare the data with former findings, we cannot claim that educational level has increased in proportion with the participation level; it has more or less stayed the same as it was 10 years ago. Also, the rate of single militants increased within 10 years by 20%, which shows us that marriage constitutes a social barrier to joining a terrorist organization. Being unemployed or working under limited economic conditions are visible factors appealing to PKK.

The most recent and remarkable research was titled as "*Kim Bu Dağdakiler*? – Who are these people in the mountains?" and it also studied the demographic profile of PKK. The study was conducted by the Turkish Economic and Political Research Foundation (TEPAV) in 2012 and presented to the Turkish parliament. The research studied the demographic data of 1,362 dead PKK militants who died between the years 2001-2011 and profiled them. The data showed that 88% of the militants consisted of male terrorists and 12% were female members. The research drew the attention of Turkish academia by pointing out the child-soldier problem. According to the data obtained, 9.25% of PKK's militants were aged 15 years and younger, and 33.41% were aged between 16-18 years, which adds up to a sum of 43% of the whole organization. Again, 43% of the female militants were under 18 years old. The same research points out that the average participation age was 19.4 years among male and 17 years among female members. The

youngest participant joined the PKK ranks at the age of 9 and the youngest militant killed in action died at the age of 14. 20% of the militants died before the age of 22. The average age of death of the militants was 26.4 years among male members and 26 years among female members. The study differentiates itself from former ones as regards its findings on the educational level of the militants. This study found out that the number of high school and college graduates among the militants increased in the recent years. While the proportion of elementary school graduates remained around 39%, similar with the former findings, the proportion of high school graduates reached 16%, and the proportion of college graduates reached a significant 11% (Özcan and Gürkaynak, 2013: 1-69). That said, we cannot easily establish a correlation between the level of education and participation due to the PKK sign-up spike of college graduates. This study also shows us that within 10 years from the last similar research, the average age of the members of the PKK was still very near to being under-aged and that 43%, which is very close to half of the organization, still consisted of under-aged militants. The study also shows that the male-female ratio of militants also stayed the same as before. The average age of death has increased slightly, which is a direct result of the negotiation process and related to the reduced number of clashes with security forces.

However, according to an executive member of PKK-KCK, the recent number of recruitment into PKK has exceeded the number of recruitment in 1990s. There was about 1000 recruits per month in the 1993; currently it is more than 1,200 new recruits per month (Zaman, 2014: 9). Although one should err on the side of caution against such an extra-ordinary and propagandized discourse, it can be deduced that the negotiation and no-conflict process was unable to prevent and reduce the recruitment into PKK.

As the negotiation process continued, PKK discovered another way to recruit under-aged militants as part of its urban law-enforcement units. Similar to the Basij Force in Iran, PKK has formed law-enforcement units in cities where it proclaimed de facto administration from under-aged sympathizers and called it YDG-H, the Revolutionary Patriotic Young Movement. The young guns of YDG-H – almost all of them under-aged children – set up temporary precincts and check points in several cities such as Cizre and Diyarbakir in the southeastern region of Turkey and conduct security checks, write tickets and even do drug raids to nearby clubs and cafes.

Last but not least, in light of the above, we can claim that PKK pursues a human resources and propaganda strategy to form the majority of its members from militants aged between 14-25 years and will recruit more young and under-aged members in the future. Therefore we can predict that PKK will try to copy the propaganda machine of Islamic State (IS – ad-Dawlah al-Islāmīyah or ISIS – Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham) and try to reach more under-aged and young candidates through the use of social media and online chat services rather than conventional face-to-face interaction and other recruitment methods.

1.3. Propaganda Techniques and Driving Factors to Join the PKK

According to the studies conducted among PKK members, the majority of the militants joined PKK because of its propaganda machine. 56.7% of the militants joined the PKK because of propaganda, 18.6% joined due to extortion and abduction, 11.3% because of domestic (family) problems, 7.2% because of economic problems and just 6.2% acted due to thrill-seeking and/or depression (Cantekin, 2006: 132). Another research indicated the effect of propaganda in recruiting members as 61.6% (Çam, 2003: 116).

When we look at the elements of propaganda, who makes it and how, the most propaganda is made by social circles and peer influence plays a major role. 67.3% of the militants were influenced by their circle of friends to join the PKK. Legal organizations affiliated with PKK makes the second-best propaganda at 18.3% and the organization's publications have an effect of 9.1%. Interesting data showed that the family's influence and propaganda to join PKK is 3.6% and relatives' influence have a 1.8% propaganda effect on the militants. Another research showed that 50% of the propaganda is made by the circle of friends (Çam, 2003: 108). One research shows that around 15% of the militants had family members or relatives in the ranks of PKK prior to their recruitment.

We could induce from the data above that PKK's propaganda preference is face-to-face interaction and promotion of influence and promotion by close friends in the social circles.

A major individual motivation factor to join PKK is the notion of freedom. The militants present a two-sided freedom image. One is collective freedom by which they aim to free their society and the other is to free oneself individually by achieving equality (Cunningham, 2003: 16).

Another crucial motivation factor to join PKK has been the feeling of security and dignification and sense of belonging for the individual that is gained by joining PKK, which eradicates the former feeling of insecurity prior to participation (Özeren et al., 2012: 9).

Ideology could be regarded as one of the main factors to join PKK as well. The belief that Kurdish people have been suffering under the Turkish state's oppression for decades motivates young Kurds to join the PKK. After PKK relinquished the Marxist-Leninist ideology, it modified its ideology by basing it on the notion of identity and ethnic nationalism.

Economic grounds and problems constitute a motivation factor for participation too. Many militants did not have a job before joining PKK, and PKK's salary and family-care opportunities makes it appealing for the ones who find it hard to secure a proper and permanent job in real life.

The psychology of youth, youthful exuberance and the identity crisis in the bloom of youth canalizes the youth to join PKK. Most youth had the anticipation of becoming a hero when they join the organization. "Becoming a guerrilla was like kind of heroism to us, other than that Kurdistan's independence was not attracting us." (Matur, 2013: 53).

Personal and domestic problems also steers the youth to join PKK. The most popular feeling during youth is to get rid of authority and set oneself free. The desire to be accepted as an individual within the family and/or society, and the need to develop an identity of one's own self, constitute a fruitful environment for PKK, which respects the youth's sense of self and hold them in esteem. As explained, most PKK militants come from families with more than six children where the youth can't have enough or mostly no love from the parents.

2. The Islamic State – IS

2.1. Who They Are and How They Rule

In recent years, the Islamic State (IS), ISIS, or DAESH (Al Dawla Al Islamiyah fi Al Iraq wa Al Sham – the Islamic State of Iraq and Al Sham-Levant) has increased in power and is now exerting control over new regions in Iraq and Syria. IS, an international Sunni Islamist group of terrorists, has endangered the lives of the people living within their regions and has also begun to intimidate the global community. IS has grown in the discontented parts of Iraq, which are inhabited by Sunni Muslims (Katzman et al., 2015: 1). The group has become very influential and has generated huge financial reserves, as well as recruited from citizens across the globe (Russia Today, 2014).

All of the fighters that make up IS are Sunni Muslims, and originate from various countries. The group is made up of combatants with prior experience in conflicts, such as those in Chechnya, Bosnia and Afghanistan, and fighters from a number of countries, including North Africa and the Gulf. IS has asserted that it believes in the rigid implementation of Shari'a rule, and that it will use highly aggressive tactics to exert control (Amnesty International, 2013: 3).

IS asserts that Abu Musab al Zarqawi (Ahmad Fadeel al Nazal Al Khalayeh), a terrorist from Jordan, created the organization. Zarqawi, a mujahideen who fought against the US in Afghanistan, became a member of Al-Qaeda, and after returning from Afghanistan to Iraq in 2004, changed the name of his group to Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). Following his involvement with three major attacks against US forces, along with many minor attacks, Zarqawi died in a 2006 American airstrike.

Later, several groups amalgamated to form the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), led by Abu Omar al Baghdadi and Abu Hamza al Muhajir. The leaders were both killed in a 2010 US drone strike. The movement became restricted at that time, although it had become associated with some secularist adversaries of the Iraq system. Many of those adversaries were former members of Saddam's military who had been labelled ex-Ba'athists. Abu Bakr al Baghdadi (Ibrahim Awwad Ibrahim Ali al Badri al Samarrai) gained control of the movement at that time. He started to reconstruct the group by implementing continuous car bombs and suicide bomb attacks. Moreover, he was greatly assisted by the Syrian War, which started in May 2011 (Barrett, 2014: 11-12).

At one point, IS pledged allegiance to Al-Qaeda. In the present day, they are no longer allies and should no longer be grouped together. The split came about in February 2014, when IS left Al-Qaeda, refusing to abide by their commands, such as to reduce attacks on civilians. The fighting between IS and Jabhat Al-Nursa, a group supported by Al-Qaeda, brought about the split. Al-Qaeda had begged for the spheres of influence to be split up, but the leader of IS, who previously had spent four years as a captive of the US before being released in 2009, refused. Therefore, Al-Qaeda cut ties with IS in February 2014, which resulted in IS labelling the group as disloyal (Russia Today, 2014).

After territorial expansion, including the capture of Mosul on 10 June, IS stated that the Caliphate was re-constituted on 29 June 2014. They called the new entity the Islamic State and said that it would be led by Abu Bakr as Caliph Ibrahim. This revival of the Caliphate was supposed to entice individuals who held Salafi/Takfiri views to support them, shared the Islamic State. It would therefore gain support from Syrian groups with similar beliefs, including Jabhat Al-Nusra, which could otherwise be considered competitors (Barrett, 2014: 13).

Altogether, IS directs approximately 31,000 fighters, 20,000-25,000 of whom are core members. By maintaining their momentum and continuously increasing financial gains, IS has become a multi-faceted association, working as a guerrilla group, rebel faction/insurgency and regular military force all at the same time. Founded on an extreme ideology, IS has taken advantage of the turmoil in their region and the unpredictability of the communities in which they operate. By behaving aggressively, threatening individuals, engaging in guerrilla and sub-conventional warfare and also conducting more traditional military attacks on a number of scales, IS is now considered capable of defeating state armies and opponent groups (Lister, 2014: 2).

IS has, therefore, become a successful force in terms of combat. However, it has also become known for its extreme violence, mass slaughter, beheadings and numerous other acts of cruelty. IS has also been involved with crimes against Yazidis and Kurds, as well as Shia, that are considered as religious and ethnic cleansing. This level of viciousness appears to be without reason, but IS believes it to be the right action to take, believing that it will terrify opponents and entice possible recruits. The violence of IS also arises from the ruralisation of jihadism. Target members of IS are usually located in rural areas, and lack education, as well as theological and intellectual development. This means that it is easier for IS to progress among the deprived Sunni communities in Iraq, Syria and Lebanon (Gerges, 2014: 340).

IS is often described as a violent non-state actor; however unlike Al-Qaeda, there are vast swaths of land where IS practically has territorial rule and where there are actually no states present in terms of its political science meaning, and given that it governs a population of six million people with the common will to live under a functioning

governmental structure, it would be a good question to ask whether IS has achieved the level of a (violent) de facto state.

The world should view IS as a real threat, rather than an uncomplicated terrorist group. IS's clear aim is to set up a self-sufficient Islamic state and is promoting its ability to regulate such a state. Operating within such an unstable environment has meant that IS's blend of hard law and suppression, with the establishment of important facilities, has resulted in some acceptance at the community level (Lister, 2014: 2).

There is a great debate going on regarding how people live in the gruesome and oppressive conditions under IS rule, which does not represent the truth. Due to the civil war in Syria, state authority had ceased to exist in the areas before IS controlled them. As a result of this lack of authority, chaos erupted and the rate of abductions, thefts, rapes and murders multiplied in those zones. After IS took over authority in the districts with these conditions, it has presented the image of a just ruling organization. With the help of its brutal savagery tactics, IS reduced the crime rate down to near zero in the cities that it captured and secured the environment for the citizens living there. Then IS tried to establish social services, and to provide food and other necessities for free for people in need. As IS's financial resources increased from oil production, smuggling of goods via Turkey and wheat growing in the vast areas of Syria, it found it easy to divert these resources into more social and economic support and to provide assistance for the people under its rule.

IS's income was calculated as being approximately $3 million per day in 2014, and the group's assets are estimated as being between $1.3 and $2 billion (Barrett, 2014: 45).

With the help of its sophisticated administrative departmentalization, IS provides free education, free housing, free healthcare services, free water, free electricity, free bread, free gasoline, very cheap oil, childcare services for people living under its rule and total life care for the wives and children of its martyrs. In order to provide these, IS operates three dams and two power plants in Raqqa and Aleppo and runs at least five industrial-scale bread factories. IS invests in infrastructure in order to make its people's lives easier. It constructs water lines and sewage pipes and recruits labour to operate heavy machinery and execute technical matters (Caris and Reynolds, 2014: 21). IS issues ID cards and passports and prints its own currency. It collects taxes and issues traffic tickets. As of today, IS has a functioning medical school in its capital, Raqqa, with students and scholars. As a result, IS has won the hearts and minds of the people in the territory it once invaded and this strategy has worked. IS is now perceived as the long-awaited liberator and has filled the position of a "just ruler" for the Sunni people in Iraq and Syria. Due to the sectarian division and structure in the latter, Sunni people were also afraid after the atrocities of the former Shiite and Nusayri (Alawite) governors, military and police units in their cities. IS was regarded as a saviour by these people, who were relieved of sectarian discrimination after IS took over.

In our opinion, IS was highly inspired by the success of the soft power of Iran's Hezbollah in southern Lebanon, which lasted for more than two decades. IS copycatted this strategy to project its soft power in the ungoverned and failed parts of Iraq and Syria. In the early 1980s, the Lebanese Hezbollah began to project its (i.e., Iran's) soft power into the outskirts of Beirut and to provide social and humanitarian services for the Shiite Arab people, which enabled Hezbollah (i.e., Iran) to win seats in the Lebanese parliament and became a decisive political figure in Lebanon within twenty years.

The people masterminding IS (as to whom, there is not much reliable info yet) have understood the power of soft power, and after diagnosing the needs of the people in areas where state authority is lacking, they decided to gain territorial control over these areas in order to project its soft power, which in our opinion IS has successfully managed to accomplish until now.

IS has become focused on administration and on generating an income that will fund governance enterprises. Its emphasis on financial independence is in stark contrast to A

Al-Qaeda's system of using external donors. This has meant that the group has had to initiate various income sources, including oil, gas, farming, taxation, illicit antiques sales, blackmail and kidnapping for ransom. In September 2014, IS was estimated to be earning $2 million per day, resulting in it being the richest terrorist group in the world (Lister, 2014: 2).

IS fulfils simple but effective administrative functions in order to meet the basic needs of its people. Its administrative branch of Religious Outreach (Da'wa) calls people to Islam.

The religious police (al-Hisba) controls the society so that Islam is lived in compliance with IS's interpretation.

The education outreach (al-Talim) fulfils another crucial function in IS's governance campaign. IS provides elementary grade education without teaching any technical or mathematical skills but only teachings of Islam.

With the help of its courts, IS fulfils the judiciary function in the Islamic manner. In order to carry out the courts' legal rulings, IS maintains a local police force in Raqqa and Aleppo.

IS has numerous recruitment offices to enlist recruits. The offices deal with the registration of possible members, who must complete all stages of shari'a and military preparation, before being sent into battle. It is also thought that some recruits are sent to intensive training camps, which are run by IS and located throughout Syria.

IS also runs a public relations/tribal affairs office as part of its bureaucratic system. In the Aleppo region, IS professes to be running such an office. The office is said to deal with any issues relating to its citizens, as well as communicating with community leaders and conducting a tribal outreach programme (Caris and Reynolds, 2014: 16-20).

In line with its Imamah doctrine, IS strives to supervise the religious and political lives of the Muslims within its Caliphate. In order to do so, IS has implemented structures of governance in Raqqa and in the Aleppo region and is aiming to extend those structures throughout other areas under IS control. Shari'a institutes and the al-Hisba religious police, as well as other programmes, have been implemented in order to back up IS's ideology. In addition, police orders and courthouses have been established to oversee the daily functioning of the region (Caris and Reynolds, 2014: 24).

As a result, it could be argued that a governance structure such as described above would reflect nothing but a de facto state. Hence, it would not be hyperbolic to claim that IS meets the requirements to fit the description of a de facto state in the region.

Map 1: Areas of IS Presence and Cities under IS control
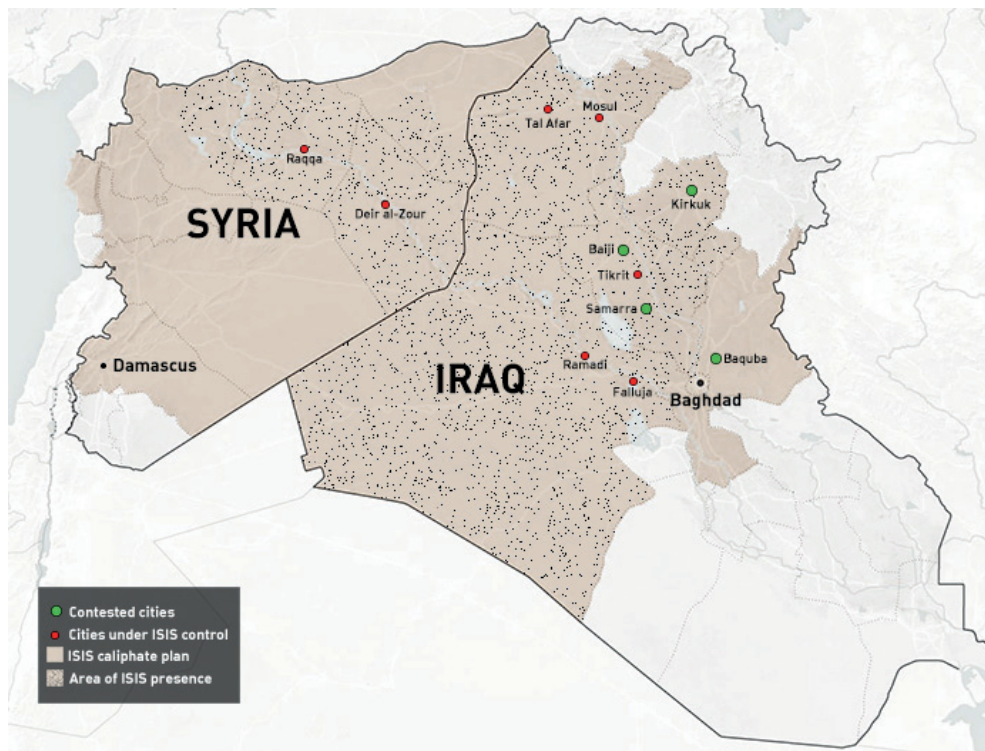
2.2. The Ideology of IS

IS has its roots deep in the radical ideologists of Salafi/Takfiri doctrines that stretches from the 14th century scholar Ibn Taymiyya through Muhammad ibn ʿAbd al Wahhab, Hasan al-Banna, Abul Ala Maududi and Sayyid Qutb.

Ibn Taymiyya (1268-1328) claimed that the Muslim society in the 8th century in Medina was the perfect example of an Islamic State. In order to restore the magnificence of Islam, one should turn to the times of Mohammed and the four caliphates and

Islam should be purified. Taymiyya distinguished a clear line between Dar al-Islam (the lands under Islam rule) and Dar al-Harb (the lands that are not under Islam rule and should be brought under Islam rule by means of war) and said that every Muslim must act in accordance to this distinction (Whelan, 2006: 59). Ibn Taymiyya also laid down the Islamic jurisprudence for a Muslim state to fight another Muslim state because the latter does not fulfil the necessities of genuine Islam. He stood for, and legitimized, Mamelukes' war in Levant with another Muslim nation, the Mongols (Sivan, 1990: 96-98).

Muhammad ibn ʿAbd al Wahhab (1703-1787) was a preacher who was taken under the protection of the al-Saud tribe, which was the dominant reformist and insurgent group in the 18th century. Al-Wahhab continued Ibn Taymiyya's doctrine of backtracking to the times of Prophet Mohammed and revisiting Allah's messages in their genuine form, as was told to Prophet Mohammed (Burke, 2004: 54). Later on, after 1973, the al-Saud family adopted his theories as a safeguarding ideology, in order to withstand the pressure of Arab nationalism and socialist Nasserism (Esposito, 2003: 103).

Hassan al-Banna (1906-1949) was the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1928 and the first ideologist to call for jihad against the non-Islamic rule in Egypt. He rejected the modernization of Islam and called for a pure Islamist governance under the Qur'an's verses, which would constitute the single source of legitimacy. Al-Banna saw the Western world's superiority as a tool for humiliation and threat (Burke, 2004: 60). Al-Banna was assassinated in 1949.

The second modern political Islamist who influenced the ideology of IS is Abul Ala Maududi or Mawlana Maududi (1903-1979), who was the founder of Jamaat-e-Islami, which could be seen as the Pakistani version of the Muslim Brotherhood. He also promoted the way of jihad in order to achieve a political goal, which is to establish the Islamic state and Islamize the society.

Among the founding fathers of the ideology behind IS's Islam interpretation, Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966) plays the leading role. Qutb could be described as the godfather of militant jihad. He was radicalized when Nasserist forces suppressed the Muslim Brotherhood and called for armed revolution against the Kuffar (infidels), while denying Banna's and Maududi's political Islamist way, which was to struggle for an Islamic state within a legal framework (Esposito, 2003). According to Qutb, all societies of the modern world are non-Islamic and anti-Islam and he describes them as "jahiliyyah", the pre-Islamic age of ignorance (Qutb, 1999: 176-180). After the assassination attempt on Gamal Abdel Nasser in 1954, the Muslim Brotherhood was disbanded, and Qutb was executed by hanging with five other leaders of the party, on the grounds of an alleged coup d'état in 1966.

In light of the above-mentioned theologians, it is therefore clear that the main ideology of IS is that the Qur'an and the Hadith must be strictly followed, and that any attempts to move away from a literal reading must be eliminated. Thus, Shi'ism,

Sufism, or anything else that is not in line with their strict beliefs, should be demolished. This is the main belief of takfirism. In this context, the Islamic State asserts that its violence is necessary, by claiming that its actions are all carried out with the aim of re-establishing Islam in its purest form, bringing the Muslim world together, and reinstating the pride and power of its people (Barrett, 2014: 18).

2.3. Human Resources of IS, Its Propaganda Machine and Motivations to Join

Precise figures regarding the number of IS members have not been reported, but a number of publications report the number as being between 20,000-31,500 members from 81 countries. Of these fighters, half are from Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Turkey and Morocco (Barrett, 2014: 16).

In order to keep the state running, IS employs numerous administrators. The administrators are a combination of volunteers and those who have been forced into service, the latter being the majority. IS fighters are also made up of volunteers and those conscripted into service, who come from families and tribes in defeated areas. IS has encouraged their workers to remain in their jobs and pays them wages (Barrett, 2014: 10).

In a report published by the International Centre for the Study of Radicalization and Political Violence (ICSR), it is estimated that the number of foreign fighters in Syria is between 5,000 and 11,000. It has been reported that the fighters originate from 74 countries. It is calculated in the report that approximately one-fifth (18%) of the foreign fighters are from Western Europe, most of these originating from France (63-412), the UK (43-366), Germany (34-240), Belgium (76-296) and the Netherlands (29-152).

In terms of non-European countries, the majority of fighters originate from Australia (23-205), the US (17-60) and Canada (9-100). These figures are no longer current, however. The numbers are now being amended regularly, as updated data becomes available. The EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator, Gilles de Kerchove, estimates that the reported number of European fighters in Syria has increased from 500 to over 3,000 in recent months (Briggs and Silverman, 2014: 9).

It is impossible to precisely profile violent extremists, and it is equally difficult to describe a specific kind of foreign fighter. Fighters range from uneducated amateurs, who see the journey as a part of growing up, to serious combatants who are seeking action and suffering. There are also people who go for humanitarian reasons, but who end up being pulled into the conflict. Therefore, foreign fighters are in Syria for numerous reasons, including apathy, generational difficulties, ideological reasons, in search of heroism and attention, to gain peer acceptance or to seek revenge (Briggs and Frenett, 2014: 7).

IS deploys the most sophisticated propaganda tactics in the history of terrorism. With the help of social media, online video and chat services, video graphics and special effects, IS is just a click away from being able to reach potential recruits that are actually far beyond its reach. Sharing the beheadings and other execution videos

via social media has become a force-multiplier in IS's propaganda. By using the most sophisticated propaganda techniques, IS can project a power that it actually does not possess and recruit and radicalize more foreign fighters, intimidate the enemy, and incite its own militants. Special attention must be paid to the way in which IS demonstrates its vindictive marketing skills. For the first time in history, there is an image of a Muslim entity that can challenge and even defeat the West. The common imagery of the orange jumpsuit, worn by IS's captives, is reminiscent of those worn by detainees in Guantanamo Bay prison. Even with only one image, IS is asserting its reciprocal approach and constitutes a beacon of hope for potential young recruits who are seeking revenge. IS's propaganda machinery's simplicity is disproportionate to the effects and success created by it.

The well-developed outreach campaign enforced by IS has had a notable effect on Sunni youth across the globe. This is because IS has portrayed the movement as being very important, and capable of attaining great success. It gives the youth an idealistic view, as well as showing them that they can be involved with a political movement. The young members of IS do not loathe the group's violence. In contrast, the brutal tactics against IS's opponents seem to attract them (Gerges, 2014: 342).

Another point of worry is the involvement of young women from the West. As presented by a study by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, 550 young women joined IS from countries throughout the West (Hoyle et al., 2015: 8). Looking at their reasons, it seems that the majority of them join for the same reasons as the male recruits. Primarily, their motives are psychological. They believe that Islam is being threatened by non-Muslim nations; that the Ummah (Islam Community) is under threat and that the Western world is suppressing Muslims on a global scale. The women are not only refusing the future and political policies of the West, but are also seeking a change and an idealistic future for society.

The women intend to give to this society, ruled according to Shari'a law. In this context, IS's territorial expansion is essential to enticing the female members, as they are envisioning the role they can play in this extended society (Hoyle et al., 2015: 12). The women do not simply see the creation of a Muslim caliphate as attractive, but that it is necessary for them to play a part in its creation. Their firm belief in the afterlife means that satisfying their religious duty is necessary to them reaching heaven. Furthermore, they will receive rewards throughout their lives that are sought out by the muhajirat. The vision of attracting the ideal husband is significant amongst IS's female supporters and marriage is thought of as being an important factor in migration. In addition to marriage, female supporters of IS also assert the importance of fellowship and community that they experience in regions ruled by IS. This is very different from the false relationships that they experience in the West. This hunt for camaraderie and identity appears to be an important factor in the migration of women (Hoyle et al., 2015: 13).

IS requires women to be morally good and to raise upstanding children. The role that IS designated for women is to be a righteous wife and to raise righteous children.

As to the motivations of IS's male fighters who are believed to be very young, although there are no reliable studies on the male members of IS, we can easily adapt and accept the outstanding research by the US Institute for Peace that was conducted with 2,032 young members of Al-Qaeda and that tried to seek an answer to the question of why youth join Al-Qaeda.

The study stated the primary factors that motivated foreign fighters under a "4 Seekers Model". The first of these is the Revenge Seeker. This is someone who sees himself as a victim and believes that it is his environment and circumstances that is causing him to be unhappy. Many of the individuals who took part in the study argued that they wanted to fight in order to punish the West for their treatment of Muslims. As the conversations continued, it became obvious that they felt displeasure towards members of their families, particularly their fathers, or with members of their communities. These feelings existed prior to the individuals showing an interest in Al-Qaeda.

The second type is the Status Seeker. Revenge seekers were largely found to be living in Middle Eastern Muslim regions, while the status seekers were more common in the West. The status seeker is someone who views the world as a place that does not comprehend him as he recognises himself. His annoyance arises from his lack of success, in terms of being successful and appreciated by his community.

The third kind of person is the Identity Seeker. In contrast to the status seeker, who was clearly differentiated from the majority, the identity seeker is more anxious about fitting into an organization. Existing as a member of something is their primary motive. The fourth type is the Thrill or Adventure Seeker. This group made up the smallest number of those studied, less than 5 percent. The thrill seekers were also found to have a very different motivation from the other three groups. They are filled with vitality and want to complete an onerous task. They are generally bored in their own communities and are in search of an adventure. Additionally, they tend to come from middle or upper middle class families, but believe the family business to be tedious. The thrill seeker is frequently drawn to aggressive video games and to the stories recounted by returning fighters. He is motivated by Al-Qaeda's depictions of heroism and the promise of glory (Venhaus, 2010: 8-11).

As it is easy to realize from the above study, the same categories could be applied to the youth support of IS. The young recruits of IS are also driven by the above-mentioned motivations.

IS extols the virtues of revenge. Repeated humiliations by the US and the West victimized the Ummah (Muslim community). IS presents itself as strong enough to hit back, take revenge and withstand the West as a Muslim force for the first time in history. The appealing point is that IS is live evidence that Muslims can win against the West and establish an Islamic state. This winning horse image should be considered as

the main driving force that is appealing to the potential young guns to take part in the victories against the West, the arch enemy, who is responsible for the current situation of the Muslim world, and to avenge this.

There were also participation in IS by Turkish youth and the Turkish youth's motivations are more or less the same as the motivations explained above. However, we could name some additional factors.

The new Turkish foreign policy, formulated by Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, which includes the revival of the Caliphate and reuniting the geography of Islam, while disbanding Sykes-Picot, gives a similar image as the discourse of IS. Moreover, President Erdoğan's preferred style and governance is a system that takes its roots from the doctrine of Muslim Brotherhood and shares the same ideological founding fathers with IS. The manners and discourse of these two political Islamists portray a Muslim world that experiences constant oppression and humiliation by the West. President Erdoğan's high-pitched voice against Israel and the US makes it easy for Turkish youth to be mentally and potentially ready for IS's propaganda. Also, the "tough guy and challenging" character of President Erdoğan is a role model for the youth to be the saviour of Islam and to take on Israel, the US and infidel Muslim administrations. The unverified rumour of the Turkish government's logistical support to IS, and the press images of Turkish Intelligence Service's trucks full of rockets headed to Syria, also create a perception of them being on the same side as IS. Without evidence, it would be just a claim to make such an assumption. Although we cannot clearly name these factors as motives, we could define them as political grounds for motivation.

Another motivational factor for Turkish youth to be mentally prepared for IS propaganda is the government-backed TV shows. Highly rated political Islamist and ultra-nationalist Turkish TV show *Kurtlar Vadisi* (The Valley of the Wolves) could also have an influencing effect on Turkish youth to join IS. It is not one of the main driving factors, but it connects the dots in potential young guns' minds. The show is about a lone wolf, "fedayeen", who operates with the consent of the administration in Turkey against the enemies of Islam and Turkey – Bashar Assad, MOSSAD and the US.

Conclusion

To conclude, when we compare the motivations of the youth to join PKK and IS, we can realize significant similarities between the driving factors of recruitment into PKK and IS although their ideological bases are completely different.

The sense of being under threat constitutes a common motivation for both organizations' recruits.

The 4 Seekers Model for IS could easily be adapted to young PKK recruits as well; there would be no difference.

The IS and PKK differ in propaganda methodology; where IS prefers online propaganda, PKK prefers to recruit in the old-school way, by social circles and peer influence.

Active and dedicated female participation is seen in both PKK and IS, mostly based on the same driving factors. However, the IS forbids women from fighting and assigns the role of women to sustain, care and reproduce for the growing population of the state. In contrast, PKK does not restrict its female militants to a designated role because there is no possibility of starting a family and raising kids in PKK camps among the members, and thus women in PKK become fighters and PKK's most courageous fighters consist mostly of women.

If we would make a projection towards the future evolution of the two organizations subject to this article, it can be argued that after the Kobane/Ayn al-Arab victory against IS, PKK will likely be the only willing and capable force against IS who allies with the West, which would make it the West's go-to organization in the region. As a result PKK will gain more and more legitimacy with Western states with every new clash and receive direct and indirect support in many aspects. Another turning point for the legitimization of PKK was the rescue of the Yazidi people in the Sincar Mountains of Northern Iraq from falling into the hands of IS. The Yazidis were the only Christian minority left in Iraq and when IS attacked their lands, there was no room for doubt that this offensive would end up with a massive slaughter of the Yazidis because of religious reasons. As the Northern Iraqi Pashmerga forces failed to protect the Yazidis and vacated Sincar province when they heard IS was attacking, PKK took over and fortified the chokepoint into Yazidi villages and fought against IS until the IS elements withdrew. The saving of Christian Yazidis turned PKK into the "Oscar Schindler of the Middle East" and gave the organization the utmost legitimacy among Western democracies, which the PKK had been desperately lacking and seeking for decades. As a result of its willingness to fight against IS, PKK has successfully opened a window of opportunity, probably to replace Turkey's alliance with the West and to achieve the rank of the new strategic partner of the West, which will help it to evolve into the legitimate and capable national armed forces of the whole Kurdish entities in Northern Iraq and Northern Syria in the foreseeable future. With the possible de-facto annexation of Northern Iraqi Kurdish (Kurdistan Regional Government) territory, together with the Northern Syrian PKK-controlled areas, the Kurdish oil drilled in Kurdistan Regional Government's fields would probably find its way to be pipelined and opened to the Mediterranean Sea via Northern Syria instead of through the current Turkey's Kirkuk-Yumurtalik pipeline. This massive flow of legitimacy and self-confidence will enable PKK to consolidate its power within the PKK-controlled areas of Turkey and further project its power and create a larger power base.

As regards the future projection of IS, we could conclude by drawing a picture that takes constitutive factors into consideration. When we have a look at the criteria to be

considered as a state within the declarative theory of state, we realize that IS meets the basics that were laid down in the Montevideo Convention and Badinter Arbitration Committee. International recognition by other states is not of crucial importance to IS because it only seeks the recognition of its caliphate by Muslim people. IS differs from other religious-based terrorist organizations like Al-Qaeda with its territorial rule, population, functioning governmental structure and political authority, which makes it an exceptional entity. Moreover, IS is becoming a global caliphate as the only other entity similar to it, the Boko Haram terrorist organization in Nigeria, has just pledged its loyalty to IS and the caliphate. Boko Haram is the only example of a religious terrorist group other than IS that rules in a territory within a sovereign state, which in its case is the Borno State in Nigeria. This pledge should be regarded as a very important signal flare of the possible global outreach of IS's caliphate in the near future.

Within no more than a decade, we could see the expansion of IS's influence and even boundaries in the failed states of Middle East, such as Libya, where there is no central authority. Beginning from today, we can even foresee IS reaching out to northern Afghanistan where the state authority is lacking. The local cells of Al-Qaeda in northern Afghanistan would no longer support Al-Qaeda and would pledge loyalty to a more tangible organization with success stories behind it. If this happens, IS would be the wealthiest entity among the states in the region, as it would be able to control the opium production and trade in northern Afghanistan.

According to its current status, it is clear that IS is not invincible; however, military operations, even joint ones, will not be enough to defeat IS in the near future because the conditions in the region where IS rules do not seem likely to change in the foreseeable future. If these conditions remain the same, the perception of grievance and unjust treatment will only add fuel to the fire, which in this case would mean thousands of new recruits who are more radicalized than before to take vengeance.

Consequently, in light of the above-mentioned facts and based on factual analysis, IS can no longer be considered as a violent non-state actor, as it has become a violent de facto state which rules in two countries. If this unpleasant rise of IS continues, which seems likely because of the future dark picture as regards the socio-economic and geopolitical conditions of the region, it will not be a surprising outcome to see a "power-consolidating and power-projecting IS" not only in parts of Syria and Iraq but also in other Muslim geographies with fertile grounds where there is no governmental authority.

Last but not least, the future of IS and the region will be shaped by the outcome of the proxy war between IS and the Western allies in the region where PKK and Pashmerga will remain as more willing but also demanding (from the West) partners and a reluctant Turkey whose foreign policy that was pursued for the last five years turned it into a trailing player who fails to score due to its uncalculated/miscalculated ill-implemented policies that lack the minimum strategic vision which enables countries to maintain their territorial integrity.

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The Kurds and the Islamic State: Redrawing the Map in Mesopotamia

Ofra Bengio

The year 2014 marked the centenarian anniversary of World War I, which wrought havoc on the Kurds. Not only did they pay with their blood in fighting alongside the Ottomans against the Allies, but the geopolitical outcome of the war was that they were split among four states: Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria.[1] The governments of these states did their best throughout the last century to oppress the Kurds by negating their special identity, by attempting to smother their language, and by denying them the right of self-determination.

But the year 2014 signalled also an important turning point in Kurdish history, as they turned from being the almost eternal victim to becoming a crucial player in the Middle East. Indeed, the combination of the upheavals in the Middle East and the mercurial rise of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria in 2014 catapulted the Kurds onto centre stage in the volatile Middle East.

How did this happen? What is the impact of these developments on the balance of power in the Middle East? What are the implications for the world in general and Europe in particular?

FILLING THE VACUUM OF FAILED STATES

After the turn of the 21st century two simultaneous processes that reinforced each other have been taking place in the Middle East: the collapse of the nation states in the Fertile Crescent – Iraq and Syria – and the emergence of non-state actors which seek to fill the vacuum left by the central governments. At the same time these non-state actors have been struggling with each other with a view to gaining the upper hand in these endless battles. Since the summer of 2014 the two main protagonists have been the Kurds and the Islamic State (also known as IS, ISIL, ISIS and Da`ish), each of which is attempting to use this window of opportunity for challenging historical legacies and redrawing the hundred-year-old map of the Middle East. The fact that they reached centre stage almost simultaneously makes the clash between them that much tougher. Moreover,

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[1] For the price they paid, see Muhammad Amin Zaki, *Ta'rikh al-kurd wa Kurdistan*, vol. 1, Cairo Matba`at al-sa`ada, 1939.

as will be shown, a dynamic was set in motion whereby these two players feed on the success and failure of each other. Thus, for example, the establishment in 2012 of the Kurdish autonomous region in Syria, known by the Kurds as Rojava, turned them automatically into the main target of radical Islamists. Similarly, the swift occupation of vast territories in Syria and Iraq by the Islamic State starting from 10 June moved the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in Iraq to follow suit two days later.

A comparison between these two players shows some similarities but also huge differences. In many ways, the developments in the Kurdish arena in Iraq and Syria is a mirror image, albeit a benign one, of those occurring in the vast swath of territory now dominated by the Islamic State. Both the Kurdish entities and the Islamic State have swiftly occupied new territories, blurred the internationally recognized boundaries between existing states, built new administrations, attracted volunteer fighters from abroad, and mobilized members of the international community to fight the "bad guys" and support the "good" ones.

The war between them has been ferocious because the Kurds and the Islamic State are vying for influence on the same tract of land and its rich oil resources, because they have had opposing ideologies and orientations, and because each sought to seize the opportunity for building a strong entity on the debris of the old state.

In Syria, Kurds headed by the Partiya Yekitiya Demokrat (PYD), which is an offshoot of the Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan (PKK) in Turkey, initiated a self-governing administration in the summer of 2012. Later, in May 2013, the Yekineyen Parastina Gel (YPG), the armed wing of the PYD, took control of Rimelan, a city sitting on 60% per cent of Syria's oil, including some 2,000 oil wells.[2] This led Islamist groups to immediately target them to compete for controlling this strategic asset.

In Iraq, as the Islamic State occupied Mosul and Tikrit in June 2014, the KRG's military forces, the Peshmerga, managed to take control of disputed oil rich areas, the most important of which was Kirkuk.[3] The Kurds of Iraq enlarged the area under their control by 40 percent, which meant that they now had more than 1,000 kilometres of common border with the fledgling Islamic State.[4] Each side's territorial gains turned the Kurds and the Islamic State into the primary enemy of the other. Indeed, recognizing the Kurds' fragile hold on the newly conquered oil rich areas, the Islamic State launched its offensive against the KRG on 10 August 2014, taking Kurdish forces by surprise.[5] This is indeed the crux of the matter. The Islamic State, which launched the

[2] *Hurriyet Daily News*, 20 August 2013. http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/syrian-kurds-vow-to-fight-for-oil-fields.aspx?pageID=238&nID=52843&NewsCatID=352.

[3] For the roots of the Kirkuk problem, see Ofra Bengio, *The Kurds of Iraq: Building a State within a State* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2012) pp. 41, 53-55.

[4] *Business Insider*, 13 June 2014, http://www.businessinsider.com/iraqi-kurds-expand-territory-2014-6.

[5] For a comprehensive list of attacks and counter attacks between the KRG and IS in Iraq, see *International security*, "How much of Iraq does ISIS control?" http://securitydata.newamerica.net/isis/analysis.

process of state building immediately after the quick occupation of territories in Syria and Iraq, was thirsty for financial and economic resources. Hence, it chose as its target the Kurdish entities in Iraq and Syria precisely because the two now controlled the strategic asset of oil fields.

At the geopolitical level, the blurring of borders between Syria and Iraq gave rise to a new territorial "no-man's land," which can be called "Suraqiland," where Kurdish and Islamist entities are vying for influence. Thus, on 30 June, the Islamic State leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, announced the establishment of the Islamic Caliphate in this no-man's land. Furthermore, he declared that as far as the caliphate was concerned, the Sykes-Picot agreement of 1916, on the basis of which these states were carved out of the Ottoman Empire, was null and void, thus signalling that the internationally recognized borders were no longer valid in their eyes.[6]

In fact, the erosion of borders between Iraq and Syria began long before this announcement and it proved advantageous not just to the jihadists, whose forces kept crossing back and forth between Iraq and Syria, but to the Kurds as well. The borders between Iraq and Syria had already became porous after the 2003 war; however, in summer 2012, when Syria's Kurdish region, Rojava, initiated its autonomous project, it created new possibilities for cooperation between Syria's Kurds and the KRG, which share a common border. Indeed, shortly afterwards, the KRG built the Semalka bridge on the Khabur river to facilitate such trans-border cooperation. More than 230,000 Kurdish refugees from Syria used the crossing to enter Iraqi Kurdistan, looking for shelter.[7]

However, rivalry and competition precluded close cooperation between the Syrian and Iraqi Kurds, and it was only the war that the Islamic State launched against the KRG and Rojava that forced the two Kurdish entities to collaborate against the common enemy. In mid-June 2014, even before the Islamists' move, Iraqi Peshmerga forces seized most of the borders that divided the Kurds of Syria and Iraq, with Kurds in Syria rallying in support of Kurdish fighters on both sides of the borders.[8] Interestingly, the Kurds too began echoing in their discourse the Islamic State's announcement regarding the annulment of Sykes Picot's agreement. Thus, for example, President Barzani stated that the Sykes Picot borders "were actually artificial and not natural" and that the new borders in the Middle East were being redrawn with blood.[9]

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[6] *The Guardian*, 30 June 2014. http://www.theguardian.com/world/middle-east-live/2014/jun/30/isis-declares-caliphate-in-iraq-and-syria-live-updates.

[7] Latest News, 4 January 2014. http://aranews.net/2014/01/semalka-crossing-at-the-syrian-borders-with-raqi-kurdistan-to-be-reopened-next-month/.

[8] AlMonitor, 19 June 2014. http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/06/iraq-mosul-isis-pyd-pkk-kurds-barzani-kdp-peshmerga.html.

[9] Al-Hayat, 7 February 2015. http://www.alhayat.com/Articles/7243606.

With regard to volunteer fighters from abroad, one can see a parallel phenomenon among the Kurds and supporters of the Islamic State. Just as young Sunni Muslims have rushed from the four corners of the earth to fill the jihadists' ranks, so too have Kurds come from different parts of Europe to support the Kurdish forces in their struggle against the Islamic State. However, in the Kurdish case, these volunteers are not mainly young people but rather veteran Peshmerga fighters in their 50s and 60s, who had built their new lives in Europe but were keen to put their previous military experience to use in the service of the Kurdish national cause.[10] According to Fox News, there were so many volunteers that people were being turned away, and those who were accepted were made to purchase their own weapons.[11] No doubt this wave of volunteering is both a reflection and a catalyst for trans-border nationalism.

Within the KRG itself, there was immediate mobilization among different parts of society due to fear that the Islamic State's offensive would jeopardize the Kurds' state-building achievements of the last twenty years. The Peshmerga suffered severe setbacks during the first few days of the fighting, the worst of which were the fall of Sinjar, the centre of the Yezidi religious minority; the takeover of the Mosul Dam; and the Islamists' advance towards Erbil, the capital of the KRG region. Sensing that this was an existential threat, the Peshmergas of the two rival KRG parties, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), temporarily set aside their rivalry and united their forces in order to push the Islamist forces out of areas which had only recently fallen into Kurdish hands, such as Kirkuk, Jalawla, and the Mosul Dam. Similarly, thousands of Kurdish volunteers from within the KRG have also been rushing to the frontlines to aid the embattled Peshmerga.[12] In addition, the women's regiment, which was set up in 1996, reportedly sent female fighters to Jalawla to fight side by side with men. Interestingly, even a Salafist Kurdish group declared its solidarity with the Kurdish cause by condemning the Islamic State and stating that their Jihad was "nothing but destruction and mass killing".[13] This Kurdish mobilization enabled the KRG to reclaim by early 2015, 15,000 square km that they had lost to IS in the summer of 2014.[14]

[10] Foxnews, 18 August 2014.

[11] Foxnews, 18 August 2014 http://www.foxnews.com/world/2014/08/18/expendables-kurdistan-old-soldiers-flock-to-battefront-to-fight-isis/.

[12] Rudaw, 16 August 2014 http://rudaw.net/english/kurdistan/160820141.

[13] Rudaw, 17 August 2014. http://rudaw.net/english/kurdistan/170820142.

[14] AlMonitor, 25 February 2015. http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/02/iraq-kurdistan-peshmerga-wait-islamic-state.html?utm_source=Al-Monitor+Newsletter+%5BEnglish%5D&utm_campaign=e23e4961c9-February_26_2015&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_28264b27a0-e23e4961c9-93070441.

Another heroic war took place in Kobane in Rojava. In the fighting between the YPG and the Islamic State, which started in mid-September 2014 and lasted for five months, Kurdish individuals and groupings from the other three parts of Kurdistan came to the support of the embattled city. The most important of these were the Peshmerga forces which crossed through Turkey to assist in the fighting. The most impressive part of the Kobane encounter that captured world attention and imagination was the role of Kurdish women in the war. Theirs was not a mere symbolic force but a crucial power on the ground where females assumed leading roles alongside males.

This was a unique phenomenon in the entire world and certainly in the conservative societies of the Middle East. It should be noted though that historically speaking Kurdish women have led armies. One important example was Khanzade Sultan, who, during the time of Sultan Murad IV (1623-40), ruled over two Kurdish districts, Harir and Soran, in the present-day Irbil region. The traveller Evliya Chelebi described her military exploits, saying that she performed courageous feats of swordsmanship and that "at the head of a forty to fifty thousand strong army, she several times carried out raids into Iran".[15] Another lady warrior was Kara Fatima Khanum, who led a contingent in the Crimean war (1853-1856) to prove her loyalty to the Ottomans.[16]

On another level, the Islamic State threat worked wonders in arousing strong feelings of patriotism and solidarity among the Kurdish people as a whole, including in the diaspora, in spite of the animosity and rivalry that existed among the leadership of all four parts of Greater Kurdistan — Iraq, Turkey, Syria and Iran. It also stimulated trans-border cooperation between the guerrilla forces of all four areas of Greater Kurdistan, with fighters coming from every region to fight in the KRG and Rojava.[17] For example, the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran was deployed to the area of Makhmour, south-west of Erbil, under the KRG's defense ministry command. Similarly, the PKK and its offshoot in Rojava, which includes many female fighters, were also battling Islamist units in both Syria and Iraq. The spokesman for YPG announced on 10 August 2014 that special YPG forces had crossed the border to Iraq and had been supporting the Peshmerga in Kirkuk and Jalawla. Similarly, Mas`ud Barzani met PKK commanders and agreed about collaboration in the fighting against the common danger.[18] In another important development, the Peshmerga and YPG began coordinating their activities

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[15] Martin Van Bruinessen, "From Adela Khanum to Leyla Zana: Women as political leaders in Kurdish history", in Shahrzad Mojab (ed.) *Women of a non-state nation: the Kurds* (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, Inc., 2001), p. 99.

[16] Martin Van Bruinessen, "From Adela Khanum to Leyla Zana: Women as political leaders in Kurdish history", in Shahrzad Mojab (ed.) *Women of a non-state nation: the Kurds* (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, Inc., 2001), p. 99.

[17] See for example the document released by the Kurdistan National Congress (KNK) in this regard: "ISIS attacks and Kurdish resistance in Kurdistan", 10 November 2014. http://fedkom.nl/isis-attacks-and-kurdish-resistance-in-kurdistan/.

[18] Vice News, 14 August 2014. https://news.vice.com/article/how-kurdish-militias-have-successfully-fought-off-the-islamic-state.

to stem the enemy's attacks.[19] The two parties have probably reached the conclusion that if they do not hang together they will be hanged together. Indeed, a kind of interdependency has developed between them: The PKK, which is still considered a terrorist organization by the US and the EU, needed the legitimization which the KRG could bring them in the international arena, while the KRG needed the PKK's military prowess that was demonstrated in Sinjar and other encounters with the Islamic State forces.

One of the most impressive cases of such interdependence, which in turn enhanced Kurdish national feelings, was the fighting in Kobane in Syria, which between mid-September 2014 and January 2015 was under heavy attacks from the Islamic State and was on the verge of total collapse. The KRG, which has had strong ties with Turkey, managed to convince Ankara to allow Peshmerga forces to come to the support of Kobane. At the end of October 2014, some 150 Peshmerga fighters crossed Turkish land on their way to Kobane. Even though it was a rather small force, it tipped the balance in the war for Kobane, thanks to the weapons it brought with it.[20]

No less important was the strong national feelings and enthusiasm which they aroused among the Kurds of Turkey, many of whom came from far away to greet them with Kurdish flags and slogans, such as "long live the resistance of Kobane, long live the resistance of Peshmerga".[21] When YPG and Peshmerga forces freed Kobane from the jihadists at the end of January 2015, Kurds from all parts celebrated the occasion. A Kurdish commentator wrote that "for the Kurds, Kobane has become a symbol of the Kurdish struggle for statehood, just like Kirkuk and Halabja." For his part, Mas`ud Barzani spoke about the unity of the Kurds, stating: "The martyrdom of Zeravan – a Peshmerga from Southern Kurdistan killed in Kobane – and Nechirvan – a guerrilla from Rojava killed in the east Mosul operation – both on the same day, is the symbol of brotherhood, union and unanimity of the Kurdish nation; it showed that the whole Kurdish nation has the same cause."[22]

At the same time there was an initiative for reconciliation between rival Syrian Kurdish parties as well as between the PYD and the KDP. In October 2014, a Dohuk agreement was signed according to which the Syrian Kurdish parties agreed to set aside their differences and cooperate politically and militarily against the Islamic State. On that occasion, Barzani stated: "This agreement brings us together, and itself is a significant answer to our enemies who did not intend the Kurds to be united." For his part, Salih Muslim, co-chairman of the PYD, warned that "all the Kurdish people are

[19] Nefel, 30 September 2014. http://www.nefel.com/articles/article_detail.asp?RubricNr=1&ArticleNr=8375.

[20] An account by a Rudaw journalist, Hejar Berenji , who had accompanied the forces for more than a month. Lecture on 18 March at the Moshe Dayan Center, Tel Aviv University.

[21] *Ekurd Daily*, 31 October 2014. http://ekurd.net/mismas/articles/misc2014/10/syriakurd1628.htm.

[22] Rudaw, 28 January 2015. http://rudaw.net/english/opinion/28012015.

under attack so they should be united."[23] All in all, the Islamic State's offensive on both fronts is serving as a catalyst for Kurdish nation-building and state-building.

Close but Worlds Apart

The struggle between the Kurds and the Islamic State has multiple facets: A struggle for power, territory, oil assets and the people's hearts and minds. It has also assumed the nature of a clash of civilization within the world of Islam itself, as the two antagonists belong to the same Sunni sect. Indeed, the Islamic State and the Kurdish entities are worlds apart. The Islamic State's philosophy is based on the notion that the end justifies all the means. And the end in their case is reviving old Arab and Muslim glories by establishing an Islamic Caliphate on the debris of any other Muslim or non-Muslim entity or state, starting from the Middle East and ending in other parts of the world.[24]

By harking back to past Arab glories and by evoking Islamic puritanism, the Islamic State seeks to attract frustrated youth, who are the best powder for its revolution. In fact, for the youth this is a revolution within a revolution. Young Arab and Muslim people who were frustrated with the outcome of the revolutions in the so-called "Arab Spring" flocked to the Islamic State, which has become trendy among the youth not only in the Middle East but in many parts of the world as well. More specifically, the Islamic State harps on Sunni feelings of marginalization, which has its roots in the rise of Alawites to power in Syria in the 1960s, and in Iraq following the ousting of the Sunnis from power in the aftermath of the Iraq War in 2003. These feelings, which continue to feed the other struggle for power in the Middle East, namely that between the Sunnis and Shi`is, may grant staying power to the Islamic State or to whatever name this "Sunniland" might adopt in the future.

The Islamic State's strategy is built on the following pillars: recruitment of youth; quick occupation of lands; the establishment of administration and bureaucracies in whatever part it takes control of; and imposition of Shari`a law of Prophet Muhammad's time. Its tactics is to terrify the enemy by committing all kind of atrocities against its victims, including beheadings and burning people alive. While deploring modernity and what it stands for, the Islamic State has no qualms about employing technological know-how and the new social media for spreading panic among the population worldwide by circulating photos and videos showing horrific scenes that turn viral on the internet.

Such deeds, however, could boomerang against the Islamic State. One example was the beheading of two American journalists, James Foley and Steven Sotloff, in an interval of two weeks in August 2014, which pushed President Barack Obama to call for building a coalition "to degrade and destroy" the group. As he asserted: "We will not

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[23] Rudaw, 22 October 2014. http://rudaw.net/english/kurdistan/221020141.

[24] For an interesting analysis of the group, see Graeme Wood, "What really ISIS wants", *The Atlantic*, March 2015.

be intimidated. Their horrific acts only unite us".[25] Another example was the burning alive of a captured Jordanian pilot, Muath al-Kasaesbeh, in early February 2015, which moved Jordan to escalate its attacks against the Islamic State.

The Islamic State's atrocities against non-Muslim groups reached their zenith with the genocidal attempts against the Yezidis and Christians, whom it considers as infidel (*kuffar*). The ethnic cleansing, which has been going on for one year now, was made easier due to the fact that these minorities had been the target of harassment under previous governments as well. For example, Christians were under severe attack in post-Saddam Iraq even as the Americans were still controlling Iraq. The same was true for the Yezidis.

Part and parcel of the Islamic State's instincts for destroying whatever they thought clashed with pristine Islam was their vandalism, which reminds one of the Mongols in the thirteenth century or the Islamists in Afghanistan in the twentieth century. Like its predecessors, the Islamic State launched a campaign for destroying cultural treasures, which amounts to cultural cleansing. For example, according to "The Society for Threatened Peoples", the Islamic State destroyed 80 Christian churches and monasteries in Syria. In Iraq too, while in 2003 there were 300-350 churches, by 2014 there were only 57 left and by early 2015 only 40.[26] Recently, the Islamic State destroyed pre-Islamic Assyrian antiquities in the Mosul museum.[27] Furthermore, it also destroyed Muslim-revered shrines like the one of Nabi Yunus in Mosul. Taking pride in such actions, they do their best to publicize them with a view to spreading their propaganda all over the world and thus challenge the non-Islamic civilizations as a whole.

The Kurdish entities present a totally different picture. Generally speaking the Kurds are pro-Western, certainly in the KRG but also increasingly among the PKK and the PYD, who had Marxism-Leninism as their guiding ideology. The slow shift is explained by the fact that the Kurds have a strong constituency in Europe and that it is from there that they receive their greatest support. The Kurds also contrast sharply with the Islamic State by being moderate, tolerant, not politicized religiously and relatively democratic. And while the Islamic State continued its ethnic cleansings unabated, and the government in Iraq shied away from the refugees, the KRG granted asylum to religious and ethnic minorities such as the Yezidis, Christians and Shabaks who had fled from the Islamic State's horrors. The number of these refugees, together with internally displaced persons, reached, according to one source, 889, 878 persons by the end of

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[25] CBS DC, 3 September 2013. http://washington.cbslocal.com/2014/09/03/obama-did-not-give-timeline-for-deciding-on-strategy-to-deal-with-isis-following-beheading-of-another-us-journalist/.

[26] Press release by "The society for Threatened Peoples", 18 March 2015. https://webmail.tau.ac.il/horde/imp/message.php?mailbox=SU5CT1g&uid=123487.

[27] *The Telegraph*, 5 March 2015. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/islamic-state/11452080/Islamic-States-thugs-are-trying-to-wipe-an-entire-civilisation-from-the-face-of-the-earth.html.

2014.[28] In Rojava, too, members of ethnic and religious groups such as Armenians and Syriacs found refuge in the region, some of whom were integrated in the new Kurdish government. As one refugee explained: "Armenians and Syriacs came to understand that they had a place in this order and that they [the Kurds] would protect and defend their rights."[29]

Democratic norms is another value which has started to take root in Kurdish society, both in the KRG and Rojava. Since the first more-or-less democratic elections in the KRG in 1992, the region has been moving forward to bolster democracy by enacting different laws and by espousing freedom of speech and greater gender equality. Rojava went one step further by adopting a constitution that separates religion from the state. The more liberal, secular stance of the region is also reflected in the leading role of women in social, political and military activities.[30]

The Kurds' other asset is that they are courageous and motivated fighters. And whereas the Iraqi army, with its three divisions and huge armaments, collapsed like a house of cards in front of the Islamic State in summer 2014, the Kurds have been fighting it courageously since then, both in Rojava and in Kurdistan of Iraq managing to stem their onslaught in the Kurdish regions.

The Kurds' Ambiguous Allies

For the greater part of the twentieth century the international community all but ignored the Kurds. However, the rise of the radical Islamists on the political scene in the Middle East put into relief the Kurds' important role as the main bulwark against the onslaught of the Islamic State, not just in the Middle East but in the entire world. Realizing that with the Iraqi army's dramatic collapse, the Kurdish forces, the Peshmerga, remained the only reliable force on the ground, many countries in the West began to actively, though half-heartedly, support the KRG. Thus, the Kurds emerged as the natural, albeit undeclared, allies of the West.

European leaders began visiting Erbil to show their moral support and to coordinate activities against the IS. For example, France's president, Francois Hollande, travelled to Erbil in September 2014, where he announced that the arms France provided to the Kurds were "decisive in reversing the balance of power" in the fight against radical

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[28] AlMonitor, 30 December 2014. http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/12/fighting-iraq-creates-2-million-refugees.html.

[29] The Rojava Report, 12 August 2014. https://rojavareport.wordpress.com/2014/08/12/syriac-guerilla-now-is-the-time-to-join-the-revolution/.

[30] AlMonitor, 14 January 2014. http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/01/israel-syria-kurdish-region-separatists.html#ixzz3VNg5lLi6.

militants. However, he did not disclose the kind of arms France had sent.[31] Arms and military hardware began trickling into the KRG from other states as well. For example, Germany delivered, in September 2014, 520 assault rifles, 20 heavy machine guns and 50 anti- tank MILAN rockets, with a total value of $89 million.[32] In appreciation of this move some Kurds named their babies *Milan*.[33] Italy delivered in early 2015 four helicopters to the KRG while by March 2015, Britain had supplied the Kurds with 40 heavy machine guns, 500,000 pounds of ammunition, 50 tonnes of non-lethal support, and 30 experts who are training the Peshmerga fighters.[34] Similarly, Sweden, Finland, Denmark and the Czech Republic supplied light arms or military trainers to train the Peshmerga.

In North America, Canada sent 69 soldiers from its special forces to support the Peshmerga, as well as six fighter jets, two surveillance planes and one airlift aircraft.[35] The stance of the United States, on the other hand, remained ambiguous, with support being conditioned on preserving the integrity of Iraq. On the ground, the Americans turned the KRG into the centre of their military and diplomatic activities in the region. In early 2015 the United States even decided to establish a military base in Erbil and to dispatch military officials and warplanes to provide logistical support against the Islamic State.[36]

Practically speaking, the most crucial support to the Kurds were the air strikes against the Islamic State carried out by the US, its coalition partners in Europe and the Arab countries of the region. Forced to choose between leaving the Islamic State unchecked and directly aiding the KRG, the coalition elected to throw its weight behind the KRG, especially as it was not prepared to put its own "boots on the ground." Indeed, with this vital support, the KRG managed to stop the IS onslaught in their region. No less impressive was the coalition air strikes on IS in Kobane, which by the end of 2014, far outnumbered the combined strikes in Iraq, thus assisting the Kurdish fighters to free the city from the Islamists.[37]

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[31] Middle East Eye, 12 September 2014. http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/hollande-pledges-more-military-help-erbil-and-baghdad-iraq-visit-186242625#sthash.P3RWoASi.dpuf.

[32] Rudaw, 25 September 2014. http://rudaw.net/english/kurdistan/250920141.

[33] Rudaw, 20 March 2015. http://rudaw.net/english/search?keyword=milan&type=.

[34] Rudaw, 3 March 2015. http://rudaw.net/english/world/26022015.

[35] Associated Press, 18 March 2015. http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/C/CN_CANADA_IRAQ?SITE=AP&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT&CTIME=2015-03-18-13-24-06.

[36] Waar Media, 10 February 2015. http://waarmedia.com/english/us-to-establish-military-base-in-erbil/.

[37] A chart by the *New York Times* about the attacks against ISIS between August to December 2014 showed that the number of allies' attacks against the ISIS in Kobane was 433 while those in the Arab part of Iraq were much fewer. Even in Mosul, there were only 84 strikes. *New York Times*, 31 December 2014. http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/12/31/world/middleeast/isis-airstrikes-map.html?smid=tw-nytimesworld&_r=0.

For all the importance of this support, much is left to be desired. In spite of the fact that the Kurdish forces have undertaken the lion's share of the fighting against the Islamic State, actual military support to them is far from effective. In general, the Kurds possess old and light Russian weapons that are no match for the American heavy and modern weapons that fell into the hands of IS following the collapse of the Iraqi army. Moreover, military supplies to the Kurds are negligible in comparison to what Baghdad receives. The most striking example, which reaches absurd dimensions, is the US's military supplies to Baghdad compared to that given to Erbil. According to Michael Knights and Sam Metz:

> The net effect of US hesitation has been that only eight KRG brigades were built with $92 million of US support (as compared with 109 US-supported brigades in federal Iraq at a cost of more than $25 billion). Today the eight Kurdish units are intact, whereas almost a quarter of the federal forces have disintegrated.[38]

Complicating things even further was the insistence of the American administration on channelling arm supplies to the Kurds via Baghdad, which more often than not puts obstacles on their delivery to Erbil. The American administration appears to be clutching on to the elusive ideal of a unified Iraq.

Yet, while governments and bureaucracies have been slow in responding to these changes, there is growing awareness in world public opinion with regard to the Kurds' crucial strategic role. Thus, in contrast to the rigidity of President Barack Obama's administration, there are bottom-up shifts in the American approach towards the Kurds. Journalists, businessmen and, most importantly, congressmen are pressurizing the government to acknowledge the Kurds' loyal support to the US all along and to send them direct military support. Some even push the idea of independence. For example, Rand Paul, a Republican candidate for the presidency, declared that he would support such a move if he became president.[39]

WHY SUPPORT THE KURDS?

If interests are the main motivation behind policy making then granting substantial support to the Kurds is in the best interest of the free world. First, it should be noted that the war that is raging now in the Fertile Crescent has already had repercussions in different parts of the world, especially in Europe, which is both a main source of new recruits to the Islamic State as well as a target of its attacks. Moreover, as Ian lesser prophesied: "The latest, and third, phase of terrorism — an amalgam of Islamic

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[38] Policy Watch 2292. The Washington Institute, 24 July 2014. http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/last-man-standing-u.s.-security-cooperation-and-kurdistans-peshmerga.

[39] CNN, 11 March 2015. http://edition.cnn.com/2015/03/11/politics/rand-paul-kurds-kurdistan-country.

extremism, cultural alienation, and nihilistic violence — will have its centre of gravity in Europe.'[40]

Second, the Kurds have proven their mettle in the battlefield as well as their tolerance towards minorities and their lack of vindictiveness. Their stance contrasts sharply not only with that of the Islamic State but also with that of the Damascus government, which has massacred hundreds of thousands of Syrians, and that of Baghdad, which is fuelling the sectarian war in Iraq. This is before even mentioning these governments' failure to hold their states together or protect the minorities.

Third, channelling military and financial support to the Kurds via Baghdad sends the message that the allies have turned the Kurds into scapegoats despite their being the most reliable partner in Iraq. At the same time, this policy empowers Baghdad, which is by no means a trusted ally; it risks wasting once again important parts of such aid; and it offers Iraq on a silver platter to Iran.

Fourth, half-hearted support to the Kurds disregards the fait accompli that the Kurds have achieved on the ground as well as the paradigmatic changes that have taken place in the Middle East. The attempt to stop the Kurdish momentum towards independence seems futile and to be moving against the winds of history.

For the time being though, the Kurds are facing severe military, economic and political challenges. Shortage of modern and heavy weapons may, in the long run, tip the balance in favour of the Islamic State. In addition, whereas the KRG cannot sell its oil freely and independently because of obstacles placed by Baghdad, the Islamic State has increased its resources in different ways, such as donations it received from Gulf countries, smuggling oil and other commodities, and looting the banks in Mosul, which reportedly boosted its coffers to around $2 billion.[41] On top of this, the relationship between the KRG and the central government in Baghdad and that between Rojava and the central government in Damascus is very problematic. While the central governments seek to keep the Kurdish entities under their thumb, the latter seek to increase their autonomous powers. The Kurds feel they are entitled to these rights because they represent a nation unto itself; because they have been oppressed by the central governments; and because of their vital contribution to the war effort against the Islamic State.

The ambiguous approach toward the Kurds is rooted in fears that they will seek independence if they get military and economic support. However, as much as the US and its allies try to keep Iraq as a unified state, facts on the ground prove that there are already three different entities: Kurdistan, Sunnistan and Shi`istan. The choice is, therefore, between a radical Islamist State, which if not checked, will soon send "arms" to Europe and Asia, or a Kurdish state that will be a trusted ally in this turbulent region. Those who stick to old maps should be reminded that the international community

[40] GMF blog, 3 February 2015. http://blog.gmfus.org/2015/02/03/europe-at-the-center-of-the-terrorist-vortex-again/.

[41] *The Guardian*, 16 June 2014.

recognized a new independent state in South Sudan in 2011 even though this state is not as strong, as prosperous and as moderate as Kurdistan. If double standards are not the yardstick then the international community should apply the same rule for the Kurds, both for strategic and moral reasons.

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Islamic State, Radicalisation and the Recruitment of Foreign Fighters in Australia: The Pull to Make *Hijrah* from the Lucky Country to God's Nation

Greg Barton

Radicalisation and the recruitment of young people to become foreign terrorist fighters in Syria and Iraq represents a serious problem in Australia, and no one quite understands why the problem is as great as it is. Groups like Islamic State (IS, formerly ISIS) and the al-Nusra Front have been remarkably effective in recruiting foreign fighters from around the world. Counter-intuitively, this recruitment appears just as effective in prosperous, multi-cultural Australia – the "lucky country" – as in recession-burdened Europe.

By May 2015 it appeared that the number of foreign fighters drawn from around the world to the conflict in Syria and Iraq was of the order of 25,000 people, with most of these gravitating to IS. Approximately three-quarters of these foreign fighters come from the Middle East and North Africa, and many others come from South, Southeast and even East Asia. But a remarkably large number, more than five or six thousand, come from Western democracies (Neumann 2015; Sharma 2015). In this respect Australia is no exception to the pattern of recruitment. What is remarkable, however, is that the rates of recruitment from Australia are so very high, given that conditions of life in Australia would not seem to provide substantial push factors driving young people into the hands of jihadi recruiters and foreign combat.

That many young Australians should become radicalised and recruited to fight with Islamic State, or similar groups, is however sadly to be expected in light of the global pattern of radicalisation and recruitment. The civil war in Syria that began four years ago in many ways caught us by surprise, especially in its capacity to facilitate the rise of jihadi groups and their recruitment of foreign fighters (Alterman 2014). Even without the substantial degree of state failure in neighbouring Iraq and the long-running problem with Al-Qaeda in Iraq dominating a decade of insurgency, the civil war in Syria would have presented substantial challenges. In hindsight, the rise of Al-Qaeda in Iraq and its transformation into the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria – and then simply Islamic

State – should have been entirely foreseeable. As too should have been its power to draw in foreign recruits. Australia's involvement in the coalition that invaded and occupied Iraq a dozen years ago was obviously always going to play into the radicalisation narrative of jihadi recruiters.

But it also seemed reasonable to expect that the countries facing the greatest problem from radicalisation would be those with the largest numbers of alienated and disenfranchised Muslim youth. France, with its Muslim population of around 5 million and an economy that has been in the doldrums for decades, faces serious problems of youth unemployment in general and very high levels of Muslim youth unemployment in particular. Moreover, for all of the success of French culture in fostering inclusion and a common identity, France also has well-documented levels of suspicion and prejudice towards its North African and other Muslim youth seeking to enter the workforce. And France's particular approach to secularism means that many religiously-observant Muslims are given reason to believe that the republic rejects their faith and is suspicious of their identity (Masi 2015). Given this, it is perhaps not surprising that more than 1200 young French Muslims have gone to fight in Syria and Iraq over the last four years (Neumann 2015).

Bigotry and prejudice towards Muslims is certainly not unknown in Australia. Australian Muslim youth, like their French counterparts, also have reason, at times, to feel that their nation is viewing them with suspicion. Nevertheless, the number of truly alienated and angry young Australian Muslims is comparatively low. Australia, which unlike France, America or many other western democracies, deliberately asks questions about religious identity in its census surveys, is home to around 500,000 Australian Muslims out of a total national population of 23 million. The number of Muslims in Australia has risen sharply over the past four decades. From the earliest decades of European colonialism and settlement, Australia has always had a religiously-diverse population and 19th-century Australia had a small but significant Muslim population drawn mostly from South Asia. The so-called "Afghans" played an important role in the introduction of camels to the arid continent and the opening up of the interior. But the growth of the Muslim population has been mostly driven by migration in the last 40 years, beginning with Turks coming from the late 1960s onwards and many Lebanese coming out of the civil war in Lebanon in the 1970s and 1980s.

In more recent decades Muslim migrants have come from all over the world but increasingly from South and Southeast Asia. The 1981 census estimated the Muslim population of Australia at around 77,000. A decade later this had risen to 148,000 and in 2001 the total was 282,000. The last census in 2011 recorded 480,000 Australian Muslims. A little over a third of this population, 36%, were born in Australia with parents coming mostly from the greater Middle East. Around 10% were born in Lebanon, 8% in Turkey, 3.5% in Afghanistan, similar numbers in Bosnia-Herzegovina and a little

less in Pakistan, Indonesia, Iraq, Bangladesh, Iran, and Fiji. The remaining quarter of the Muslim population were drawn from all over the world.

The Muslim community in Australia, although sharing a common faith, is actually a complex mosaic of dozens of communities mostly identifying along ethnic lines, but increasingly, particularly for second-generation Muslims, finding common identity as Australian Muslims. Amongst the second generation a renewed sense of religious identity and the importance of faith is common. Many younger Muslim women choose to wear the hijab and therefore visibly identify as being Muslim. There are regular accounts of bigoted comments being made to Muslims on public transport, and the Australian media often contains insensitive if not outright prejudiced reports about Islam and Muslims. But in a global context Australia is largely a success story of a migrant society that has embraced its multicultural character and is at ease with diversity and difference. There is arguably less overt discrimination and underlying prejudice towards Muslims than there is across most of Europe. The situation in Australia, therefore, resembles that in Canada and the US and in many respects is better than that in the UK. Australia also has a great advantage, in that it has enjoyed decades of consistent economic growth and therefore has low levels of unemployment including youth unemployment. Muslim Australians generally share in a common migrant success story of intergenerational upward mobility and increasing levels of education, prosperity and integration.

For all of these reasons, then, one would expect that although Australia would not escape from the scourge of radicalisation it would face a lesser scale of problem than, say, France. This certainly seems to be the pattern in the US where the reported levels of foreign fighter recruitment to Islamic State or other jihadi groups fighting in Syria and Iraq is very low. No one knows the actual size of the Muslim population in the US; reliable estimates range between three and six million. Even taking the low estimate, however, the reported foreign fighter numbers of around 100 fit with the pattern of recruiters finding it difficult to radicalise youth in a Muslim community that is largely well-adjusted, well-integrated, and socially and economically successful (Neumann 2015). In Australia the number of young people recruited to fight in Syria and Iraq over the last several years is at the very least around 160 and there are good reasons for suspecting that the actual number is at least 50 per cent greater than this. By conservative estimates around 120 Australians are currently fighting with jihadi groups, mostly IS, in Iraq and Syria; around three dozen have returned and another three dozen have been killed.

These figures mean that the rate of radicalisation and recruitment to terrorist groups in Iraq and Syria amongst the Muslim population are at least comparable to that which is occurring in France and the United Kingdom, and proportionally even greater than Germany and many other European countries. By conventional reasoning Australia should look like the United States with respect to this problem and yet it looks

like France. What's going on? No one really knows but it seems fair to say that "pull" factors are much more significant than "push" factors. For whatever reason, Islamic State is enjoying significant success in identifying, radicalising, and recruiting young Australians. This is clearly in large measure due to the powerful and effective messaging coming out of Islamic State and playing out across multiple media, including social media. But more than that, it speaks to effective social networks that are facilitating radicalisation.

Although the phenomenon of radicalisation in general, whether to jihadi or any other kind of violent extremism, is certainly not completely understood, one finding that does stand out across many studies is that propaganda, messaging and marketing is only one element in radicalisation (Lavoix 2014). A much more important element is that of social networks. Very few individuals ever self-radicalise or radicalise in isolation merely through the passive consumption of propaganda material. Radicalisation generally occurs within peer networks. Sometimes groups of friends do this largely by themselves but at other times there is a clear pattern of predatory recruitment. Predatory recruitment appears to be a key element of IS radicalisation in Australia and around the world.

The pattern of radicalisation in Australia is one of sustained growth. And like much of the world, the growth over the last twelve months has been dramatic and exceeded all other periods. Although Australia has had some experience with terrorism and violent extremism well before 9/11, including some ethno-nationalist-related phenomena unconnected with Islamist extremism, the vast bulk of all incidents have occurred at or around the rise of Al-Qaeda and the 9/11 attacks and in the time since. Up until 2010, there were 33 prosecutions related to jihadi terrorism in Australia. In 2000 Jack Roche pleaded guilty to having conspired with Jemaah Islamiyah and Al-Qaeda figures to attack targets in Australia. In late 2001 David Hicks was captured in Afghanistan having been involved in training there and having earlier trained and fought in Bosnia. (It's widely accepted that his transfer to Guantánamo prison and his treatment there was unjust and contrary to the due legal process, whatever his culpability in having trained with terrorist groups.) In 2003 Joseph Thomas was arrested in Pakistan and Zaky Mallah from Sydney was charged with preparing a terrorist attack based on threats made towards the Foreign Minister and the director of ASIO. In that same year, another Sydney man – Faheem Khalid Lodhi – was charged with conspiring to prepare a terrorist attack. Lodhi had trained with the Pakistani terrorist militia Lashkar-e-Taiba and was associated with French citizen Willie Brigitte, who was indicted in the terrorist attack planning and was deported to France where he was convicted.

Shortly after these incidents, Australian authorities became aware of extremist cells in Melbourne and Sydney and established an elaborate programme of surveillance and infiltration that ran through 2004 and 2005. In November 2005 and early 2006 several dozen individuals were arrested in both cities. When this became public, it was

revealed that the randomly-assigned codename for the police operation was Operation Pendennis. Operation Pendennis not only involved the most extensive and long-running police counterterrorism surveillance operation in Australian history, it also led to the longest and most expensive court trials (Schuurman et al. 2014). It is estimated that the total cost of the police operation, which involved Victoria Police, New South Wales Police, the Australian Federal Police, and intelligence agencies, together with the cost of the court cases, exceeded $50 million. That both the police operations and the court cases were successful is no small feat, given that counterterrorism cases like this involve excessive disruption, and on the basis of circumstantial evidence eighteen of the men were sentenced to prison sentences. Members of the Sydney cell attracted noticeably longer sentences, largely because their attack plans were much further advanced.

In 2009 a second major police operation was brought to a conclusion. Operation Neath saw five people arrested in Melbourne, three of them Somali-Australians who had planned to travel to Somalia to fight with al-Shabbat, following in the footsteps of a number of other Somali-Australian foreign fighters before them. It was successfully argued in court that when the men were blocked from travelling to Somalia they decided to attack Holsworthy army base in New South Wales, a site for the training of Australian commandos sent to Afghanistan and Iraq. All five men had originally worshiped at Preston Mosque, known for its moderate mainstream teaching, and then at 8 Blacks Prayer Hall, a former snooker hall located behind a 7-Eleven store in Melbourne's north, and at the time a meeting place for those with extremist beliefs.

Australia's wake-up call to the threat of international terrorism had come several years earlier in the form of the October 12, 2002 bombing in Bali in which 88 Australians were killed and 202 lives lost overall to the bombers acting in the name of Jemaah Islamiyah. Ten Australians had been killed in the September 11 attacks the year prior, nine in the World Trade Centre towers and one on American Airlines Flight 77 that struck the Pentagon. The September 11 attacks shocked Australians as they shocked people around the world, but it was the Bali attacks that really bought home a sense of terrorism representing an immediate threat. But even then relatively little thought was given to radicalisation in Australia and its link with foreign fighters.

When Operation Pendennis became public, the possibility of radicalisation within Australia was brought home. Operation Neath served as a reminder of the link between radicalisation and foreign conflict. In hindsight, there was a long history of radicalisation and recruitment of foreign fighters: around thirty Australians travelled to Afghanistan/Pakistan in the 1980s and early 1990s and around two-thirds of these remained engaged with extremism after returning home to Australia, with nine of them subsequently charged with terrorism-related offences.

It is not known how many Australians were drawn to the conflict in Bosnia between 1992 and 1996 or in Somalia between 2000 and 2009: the numbers are thought to be relatively low but may nevertheless have involved dozens. This was probably one

reason why the surge in recruitment to fight with jihadi groups in Syria and Iraq came as such a surprise. Another reason for the surprise is the scale and speed in which these conflicts developed. The number of foreign fighters who went to train and fight in Afghanistan in the 1980s and early 1990s remains a matter of considerable debate but a conservative estimate is that 4000 travelled to Afghanistan to fight between 1980 and 1988, and that between 1988 and 1993 a further 6000 travelled to fight or at least to train in Al-Qaeda and related training camps. It is estimated that around 150 Americans were involved in this and at least 300 Southeast Asians. The Bosnian conflict is thought to have drawn in between 3000 and 5000 foreign fighters and Somalia somewhere between 2000 and 3000. The number of foreign fighters who've been involved in combat in Syria and Iraq, mostly with jihadi militias, since the outbreak of the Syrian civil war four years ago is now estimated to exceed 25,000.

Unlike the cell members involved with the groups in Melbourne and Sydney revealed in Operation Pendennis, there are a few connections between these 33 individuals and more recent involvement with Islamic state and Jabhat al-Nusra recruitment to fight in Syria and Iraq. One figure, however, whose personal involvement with jihadi terrorism runs from the 1980s through to the current conflict in the Middle East is Rabiah Hutchinson. Hutchinson was born in 1954 in the rural New South Wales town of Mudgee. In the 1980s she was teaching at JI's al-Mukmin Pesantren in Ngruki on the edge of the city of Solo/Surakarta where she was close to JI co-founder Abu Bakar Baasyir and his family. During this time she married, for a third time, to Abdul Rahim Ayub, who together with his twin brother Abdul Rahman Ayub led JI's Australian Mantiqi Four branch out of Lakemba in western Sydney in the 1990s. In 1999 Hutchinson's daughter Rahmah Wisudo from an earlier marriage married Khalid Cheikho, who later become a key figure in the Sydney Pendennis cell. In the 1990s Hutchinson had moved to Pakistan with her six children where for four years she worked in a mujahedin hospital run by Ayub Rab Rasul Sayyah and then moved to Afghanistan and ran an Al-Qaeda clinic. Whilst in Afghanistan, Hutchinson married Al-Qaeda leader Abu al-Walid al-Masri before fleeing Afghanistan for Iran shortly after the 2001 September 11 attacks. She was arrested in Iran and repatriated to Australia in 2003. In January 2014 it was reported that Illias Ayub, one of her sons with Abdul Rahim Ayub, and once a student at Belmore Boys High School in Sydney's west, had travelled to Syria to join ISIS.

Today Hutchinson has children living in Pakistan, Yemen, Jordan and Syria and is part of an extended social network of long-term extremist salafis. In Hutchinson's case her personal outlook and enduring extremist connections are clear, unlike the case with many senior salafis in Sydney and Melbourne. By definition, virtually all jihadi extremists are salafi but the majority of salafis in Australia are quiescent and are opposed to extremist violence. Nevertheless, the richly interconnected network of salafi institutions in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane appears to represent favourable

hunting grounds for jihadi recruiters. At the very least, indoctrination into hardline salafism predisposes individuals to subsequent recruitment to jihadi extremism.

The pioneering figure behind Australian salafism is Sheikh Mohammed Omran, also known as Abu Ayman. Sheikh Omran moved to Australia from Jordan, where in his younger days he was close to senior Al-Qaeda figures such as Abu Qatada. After settling in Australia, he established the national Islamic movement Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jama'ah (ASWJ) and published the e-magazine *Nida'ul Islam*, which in its first years reproduced articles by senior Al-Qaeda leaders and thinkers. Today Sheikh Omran is based in the Melbourne suburb of Brunswick where he runs a mosque. ASWJ also has other centres in Melbourne and in Sydney and Brisbane. These include the al-Azhar mosque in Belmore, ASWJ Auburn, Global Islamic Youth Centre (GIYC), Lakemba Musalla Islamic Institute and Centre, RMA in Revesby and the Essence of Life (EOL) in Sydney; Hume Islamic Youth Centre (HIYC), Islamic Information and Support Centre of Australia (IISCA), and ASWJ South East Melbourne in Melbourne; Islamic Centre of Western Australia in Perth and United Muslims of Brisbane.

It is important to recognise that Sheikh Omran has responded to the rise of IS by declaring it to be guilty of heretical fanaticism (he referred to them as being *kharajites*) and has pulled back from his early association with Al-Qaeda and other jihadi groups, regularly consulting with police. It is also important to note that, around the world, there are many groups who describe themselves as being *ahlus sunnah wal jama'ah,* which translates as "people of the way and the community". Many of these are salafi groups, but they vary greatly in their orientation, and many others have no connection with Saudi Arabian salafism, sometimes referred to as Wahhabism. Indeed, even the term *salafi* – which implies following the example of the first generation of the Prophet Muhammad's companions – is used in very diverse ways, including to describe non-Wahhabi modernist reformers.

Whilst Sheikh Omran's case appears reasonably clear-cut, the situation is less certain with several of his former protégés. One of Sheikh Omran's most famous protégés is Sheikh Feiz Mohammed. Born in western Sydney in 1972 to nominally Muslim parents from Tripoli in the north of Lebanon, Feiz dropped out of school in Year 10 and quickly got into trouble with drugs, drinking and fighting. Whilst the vast majority of Muslim migrants to Australia have successfully settled into Australian society and encouraged their children to study and work hard, thereby benefiting from intergenerational social mobility, this pattern of migrant success is less complete for the many families who have settled from Tripoli and surrounding areas of northern Lebanon. As a young man Feiz came to know Sheikh Omran and found redemption in salafism – a much more austere understanding of religion than the Islam of his parents and the discipline to turn his back on his previous hard-partying lifestyle.

In 1990, when Feiz was twenty years old, Sheikh Omran sent him to study at the Islamic University of Medina in Saudi Arabia. He spent two years studying Arabic

and four years studying Islamic jurisprudence before returning to Sydney in 1997 as a full-fledged junior sheikh. Sheikh Feiz established a masala or Muslim prayer centre in Haldon Street, Lakemba to quickly build up a following of young men coming from similar backgrounds as his own. Whilst Sheikh Feiz claims, like Sheikh Omran, to have no connections with jihadi terrorism, his public record for extreme statements is rich and lengthy. He regularly speaks disparagingly of non-Muslims in general, only referring to them by the derogatory term *kuffar*, and reserves particular antipathy for the Jews who he regards as deceitful. His public statements about women and sexual promiscuity have made him notorious, particularly when he is seen to blame the victim in sexual assault cases. By 2005 Sheikh Feiz was said to have as many as four thousand young supporters, and he engaged with street culture through his Bukhari House Centre in Auburn in Sydney's inner west. Like the centres that were later to follow in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane, Bukhari House was a two-storey establishment with an Islamic bookstore downstairs and a press centre-cum-lecture hall upstairs. In 2005 Sheikh Feiz moved to Lebanon, in part to escape from the scrutiny of Australian authorities. He brought Mohammed Elomar, the nephew of the Pendennis ringleader of the same name, to Lebanon. In June 2007 Elomar was arrested for helping to supply financial and other aid to the jihadi extremist group Fatah al-Islam. Lebanese authorities arrested and prosecuted several other of Sheikh Feiz's companions, although he himself was able to return to Sydney.

Sheikh Feiz did not return to Australia until late 2010, spending much of his time away studying in Malaysia. In 2007, whilst abroad, he established the Dakwah Central centre, a *musallah* (prayer hall) located behind the Bukhari House Islamic bookshop, in the western Sydney suburb of Auburn. Three years later this become ASWJ Auburn and he later opened other branches across Sydney, including the Global Islamic Youth Centre in Liverpool in Sydney's outer west.

The extent to which salafi centres can be part of the problem, or part of the solution, is not clear and varies from case to case. On the one hand, for those already convinced of a salafi position and in danger of being radicalised and recruited, it is only the salafi teachers and community that can easily connect with and persuade them away from the path of violence. On the other hand, the available evidence about individuals who have been radicalised and recruited suggests that not only have they been the victims of predatory recruiters but that those predatory recruiters have found salafi community groups to be "happy hunting grounds". Although this does not necessarily mean that the leadership of these groups were in any way complicit.

The groups clearly of greater concern are those salafi committee centres that have broken away from the original ASWJ network. In recent years there have been three centres of particular concern: al-Risalah in Sydney, al-Furqan in Melbourne and iQraa in Brisbane. All three premises follow a similar pattern, like Sheikh Feiz's Bukhari House, taking the form of modest rented shopfronts with a bookstore downstairs and

a meeting hall upstairs, wedged in an otherwise unremarkable row of contiguous businesses. The most notorious of the three – the one most connected with patterns of radicalisation and recruitment of foreign fighters to Iraq and Syria – is al-Risalah in western Sydney. For many years this community drop-in centre-cum-prayer hall and business was one of the key centres of extremist teaching in Sydney and a regular venue for local and visiting radical preachers. Up until the end of September 2014 it was led by Wissam Haddad. After the Operation Appleby raids of September 16, Haddad announced that he was closing the centre, citing the burden of years of oppressive surveillance. The business on the ground floor had been closed a year earlier but the centre continued to be a meeting spot for extremist teachers and their followers before its closure in September 2014. Al-Risalah was openly linked with the group Street Dakwah, and Haddad acknowledged that part of its business model was to raise funds to support groups like Street Dakwah.

Twenty-nine-year-old Melbourne-born convert to Islam Musa Cerantonio was a semi-regular speaker at al-Risalah. Long well-known in salafi circles for his eloquent preaching in English aimed at an audience his age or younger, Cerantonio had established himself as a popular television preacher-cum-celebrity sheikh whilst living in Cairo, Egypt. In 2014, he was arrested in the Central Philippines and repatriated to Australia. Authorities had long been concerned about his extremist sermons and their broad popular reach via social media. When the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation at King's College in London conducted research on extremist salafi and jihadi social media influences, Cerantonio – remarkably – came out towards the top of their list. Cerantonio denies any link with jihadi groups but is open in his admiration for the establishment of the caliphate and the achievements of IS. Australian authorities were unable to charge him with any offences as, despite his broad popularity and undoubted influence, the lack of clear connections with jihadi groups makes establishing culpability very difficult. In late 2014 the Australian parliament passed a series of amendments to counterterrorism legislation, one of which concerns the promotion of terrorist ideas and support for terrorist groups. Under this legislation it is likely that Cerantonio's previous pattern of behaviour might render him liable to prosecution. At the moment, however, he lives quietly with his parents in West Footscray, in Melbourne's inner west, making only sufficient comments to suggest that his extremist views and support for the caliphate remain undiminished.

Another popular, charismatic young preacher who is often styled as being a sheikh like Cerantonio – but has no formal qualifications – is Perth-based man Junaid Thorne. In January 2015 Thorne openly expressed praise for the Charlie Hebdo attackers in Paris and was critical of the police response. He has been critical of police responses in September 2014, associated with Operation Appleby in Sydney and Brisbane, and in April 2015, with Operation Rising in Melbourne. Thorne has continued to travel regularly from his home in Perth to speak at al-Risalah in Sydney and al-Furqan in

Melbourne. Born to an aboriginal father and a Saudi mother in Melbourne, Junaid and his older brother Shayden have spent many years living in Saudi Arabia. Shayden was arrested by Saudi authorities on terrorism charges, apparently because of his extremist association, and served three years in prison before being released in February 2014. Because of his role in protesting this imprisonment, Junaid also spent a period of time under close surveillance and house arrest in Saudi Arabia. All of this, together with his formal and informal studies in Saudi Arabia and his eloquence in Arabic, has made him a popular youth preacher.

In January 2014, not long after his return to Australia, Junaid Thorne played a key role in promoting links between al-Risalah in Sydney and the German extremist group Millatu Ibrahim (MI), an extremist group founded in Germany in November 2011 by Al-Qaeda supporters from Austria and Germany. One of the highest profile figures associated with MI is Denis Cuspert – better known as Deso Dogg, his stage name as a popular rapper. Cuspert has travelled to Syria and in June 2014 declared his allegiance with IS. This development did not come as a shock, as the logo used by MI is the distinctive Syahadah banner used by IS with its unique white circle containing the second part of the statement of faith. The group takes its name from a book of the same name written by influential jihadi theorist Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi.

Al-Risalah has seen a succession of radical preachers and teachers over the years. A significant early figure was Sheikh Abu Sulayman. Born in Egypt as Mostafa Mahamed, he moved to Sydney as a young man and in 2012 was a regular preacher at al-Risalah, openly advocating support for the jihadi groups opposing the Assad regime in Syria. In 2013 he left Australia for Syria and joined Jabhat al-Nusra (JN). In the last two years he appears to have risen swiftly through the JN ranks, and is now the most senior Australian known to be involved with JN. In 2014 he appeared in a JN video in which he was presented as a senior leader, and in the previous year he was involved in negotiations between JN and IS that ultimately broke down.

The most significant figure involved with al-Risalah was Mohammad Ali Baryalei. Baryalei's story mirrors that of the many young men he was able to influence and recruit to fight in Syria and Iraq. It is thought that he played a role in the radicalisation of at least thirty young men, mainly in Sydney, through his work with Street Dakwah. Baryalei came to Australia at a young age when his parents were fleeing violent extremism and unrest in Afghanistan. His parents, by all accounts, adjusted well to their new life in Australia but as a teenager Baryalei began to get into trouble with drink and drugs and a hard-partying lifestyle. Eventually he ended up working in Sydney's King's Cross nightclub district as a spruiker, enticing customers into one of the district's many sex clubs. Through the Street Dakwah circle he came to find redemption in religion. Under the influence of al-Risalah and Street Dakwah, however, Baryalei's redemptive narrative came to focus on radical activism. Drawing upon his own experience, he effectively pitched the zero-to-hero message to dozens of young people and he persuaded

them to migrate to Syria and Iraq. Initially drawn to JN, Baryalei, like many others at the time, transitioned to the rising power of IS.

Whilst based in the capital of Islamic State, in Ar-Raqqah, Syria, Baryalei continued to maintain active communication with these networks back in Sydney and Melbourne. One young protégé with whom Baryalei intently engaged was Omarjan Azari. On 16 September 2014 Australian authorities intercepted a particularly disturbing telephone conversation between Baryalei in Syria and Azari in Sydney. Over the previous half-year or so, they had followed numerous communications in which the pair had discussed possible attacks in Australia (Levy 2014a). Evidently the attack mode in question was to mirror that used in Woolwich, London in April 2013. In the conversation intercepted on that September day, Baryalei instructed Azari to pick any random unbeliever and finish him or her off and put the flag of Islamic State in the background (Maley and Stewart 2015). The intercepted communication triggered a series of police raids across Sydney and in Brisbane involving more than 800 police officers, the largest such raids in Australian history. The police operation that had involved surveillance on Baryalei's network link to al-Risalah was known as Operation Appleby.

In Brisbane, police raided the iQraa bookshop run by Omar Succerieh. Like al-Risalah and al-Furqan, iQraa was a modest, rented storefront displaying books, garments and perfumes downstairs and housing a large meeting room upstairs. Following the raid, police arrested Omar and Agim Kruzei, who were charged with making preparations for an act of terror in Australia. The legal cases against the two men are complex and appear likely to be drawn out given the usual difficulties of proving intent. What is known about Omar with some certainty is that his younger brother travelled to Syria and became Australia's first known suicide bomber fighting with jihadi forces there. The extent of radical networks in Brisbane is considerably more limited than in a much larger city like Sydney but the networks in both cities, and in Melbourne, appear to be richly interlinked.

It is believed that Baryalei died during fighting in Kobane, northern Syria in October 2014. Although much remains unknown about who backed, directed and assisted him after he joined IS, what is clear is that his social network in al-Risalah and al-Furqan has been the single most extensive recruitment network operating in Australia. He is directly linked with many of the best-known cases of radicalisation and foreign fighter recruitment, with one high-profile case involving Amira Karroum and Tyler Casey: a young woman from Queensland's Gold Coast and a young man from Brisbane who met in western Sydney through the Street Dakwah, fell in love, married and moved to Syria in quick succession. Tragically, in January 2014, one week after moving to Aleppo to fight with JN they were shot dead in cold blood by militia aligned with IS, victims in the internecine conflict between rival groups of fighters. Their story is particularly instructive in that it reflects elements common to many radicalisation cases.

Tyler was born in Adelaide in 1990 but then moved to Queensland, growing up in turbulent circumstances with his three younger half-brothers and his recovering drug addict mother, who found solace and purpose in fundamentalist Christianity. When he was just thirteen his mother moved the boys to Colorado Springs. The move to America proved unsettling for the young Tyler who quickly ended up in trouble with petty crime, gangs and drugs. His own salvation came through his conversion to Islam, much like Baryalei's experience. Unfortunately, as Tyler fled fundamentalist Christianity for fundamentalist Islam and youth gangs for youth activists, he ended up running into the arms of Al-Qaeda. He became an Al-Qaeda activist whilst in America and when he moved back to Australia and settled in Sydney it was his Al-Qaeda connections that took him to al-Risalah and Street Dakwah.

Amira attended an Anglican girls' school in Queensland and grew up much like other Australian teenagers. Things began to change, however, when she and her younger sister were moved by their parents to stay with relatives in western Sydney and she came to better know her cousins, one of whom had served a five-year sentence for his involvement with the Penennis Sydney cell and another who would become actively engaged with Street Dakwah after a long history of violent crime. Through them and through Street Dakwah she came to know Tyler, who by this stage was using the name Yusuf Ali and was a charismatic young street evangelist. In January 2014 the young couple travelled to Aleppo, Syria, intending to fight with Jabhat al-Nusra. Within days of arriving, however, they were ambushed by ISIS militia and shot dead.

Another notorious older man linked to Baryalei, al-Risalah and Street Dakwah is Hamdi Alqudsi. In December 2013 Hamdi was charged with facilitating the recruitment of seven young men to fight with IS. One of the young men allegedly recruited by Hamdi was Mehmet Biber, who travelled to Syria in July 2012 (Maley and Box 2013). Another young recruit was 22-year-old Caner Temil. Caner, who lived in Auburn in western Sydney, spent much of 2009 and 2010 in the Australian Defence Force before being discharged, and was killed whilst fighting with IS in January 2014, shortly after Tyler and Amira were shot dead.

Amongst the dozens of cases of radicalisation and recruitment we know about, recruits appeared to fall into two broad groups: those like Tyler, Amira, Caner and Mehmet who come from non-extremist family backgrounds but are drawn in through a new circle of friends, and those whose immediate family have exposed them to extremist ideas from a young age. An example of the second category is Zakaryah Raad. Four of Zakaryah's uncles were arrested in Melbourne in conjunction with Operation Pendennis, and two of them were successfully prosecuted and served time. Zakaryah himself lived in Sydney, and apart from association with his extremist uncles, he also came under the influence of the charismatic older man, and friend of Sheikh Feiz Mohammad, Wassim Fayad. In June 2013 Wassim was convicted and sentenced to 16 months for the violent whipping attack, in the name of sharia discipline, of a young

convert. He was assisted in the attack by Zakaryah but the young man was given a suspended sentence (Levy 2014b). Then in December 2013, whilst on bail and appealing his previous conviction, Wassim was charged with involvement in a ram raid attack on an automatic teller machine with the alleged intention of seeking to secure funds for a terrorist plot (Bashan 2013). Significantly, Wassim was also involved as a community leader in the notorious September 2012 riots in central Sydney's Hyde Park. The protests, which turned violent, had been called in response to the circulation of the "Innocence of Muslims" film trailer. Several other figures, most notably Khaled Sharrouf and Mohammed Elomar, were also involved the Hyde Park riot. In 2014 Zakaryah Raad travelled to Syria along with some of his cousins and uncles and joined IS.

Khaled Sharrouf and Mohamed Elomar also travelled to Syria to join IS, and in the second half of the year gained notoriety through their frequent social media postings of violent images. Both men had their young children travelling with them and some of the more disturbing images included the fathers posing with their young sons holding the severed heads of Syrian soldiers that had been overrun in the city of Raqqah. Later on, still images and video clips were posted of Khaled apparently executing prisoners and meting out punishments. Both men posted on social media about raping Yazidi slave girls and offering others for sale.

Khaled Sharrouf had served a jail sentence of a little less than four years for his role in the Sydney Pendennis cell. Mohamed Elomar's uncle – also Mohamed Elomar – is currently serving a 28-year prison sentence for his role in leading the Sydney cell. Disturbingly, more than half of the Pendennis detainees remain unrepentant and unreformed, and actively support IS. Sheikh Abdul Nacer Benbrika, who would become largely forgotten whilst serving a long sentence in a maximum security prison in Victoria, gained overnight charisma when IS declared a caliphate and Benbrika declared his loyalty to the caliph. The five most senior members of the Sydney cell receive regular visitors to their high-security prison. Whilst all the men are careful about what they say during prison visits, observers argue that the visitors frequently appear to be seeking their blessing before leaving Australia to travel to Syria and Iraq.

Another case where the involvement of a former Pendennis cell member appears very clear involves Adam Dahman, who left his home in the north of Melbourne in November 2013, aged seventeen. Seven months later he killed himself and five others detonating a suicide vest in a crowded market in Baghdad (Calligeros 2015). Adam came from a very mainstream family background with no history of extremism; unfortunately for that family, however, Adam's sister Maryann married Ahmad Raad, one of the men prosecuted over their involvement in the Melbourne cell. It appears that Adam's brother-in-law, in a short space of time, won over his confidence and turned him from regular Australian teenage obsessions to a much darker direction – those close to Adam say that Ahmad "fried his brain". There are many other cases, however,

where the source of radicalisation is not known but the young recruit appears to have been preyed upon by a skilful predator. Such appears to be the case with Abdullah Elmir, who left Sydney in late 2014 as a seventeen-year-old schoolboy travelling with a sixteen-year-old classmate. Abdullah's classmate was rescued by his father but sadly Abdullah himself continued on to Syria and into the arms of IS, appearing in two carefully staged propaganda videos in which the schoolboy is surrounded by hardened fighters. An increasing number of cases are coming to light of teenagers being radicalised and recruited, generally by unknown figures.

Another such case involves Melbourne teenager Jake Bilardi. We don't know exactly how Jake was radicalised or who the influences were in his life, but we have some insight into his personal journey through his extensive and eloquent blog posts from January 2015 – just two months before he was reported to have died as a suicide bomber in Anbar province in western Iraq. Jake writes about growing up looking for answers. A precocious and idealistic teenager, the introverted Jake retreated from the unpleasantness of being an awkward loner at school by avidly reading about international politics and foreign affairs. According to his blog account form January 2015, he quickly became persuaded that the international system was corrupt and oppressive and that the various revolutionaries, insurgent leaders and so-called terrorists of the late 20th century were really freedom fighters.

Jake, who was estranged from his father, was shattered when his mother died of cancer in 2012. Although his own family had no religious background, describing themselves as atheists, Jake found solace in Islam. For a while this distracted him from his previous radical political inclinations, but at some point the circle closed when he began to avidly read about Al-Qaeda. He decided to travel to Syria and join the Al-Qaeda affiliate JN but as he corresponded with new friends online became persuaded that IS was the movement he should support. By the time he was corresponding with Australian journalists while based in Syria, he described himself as "chasing death" and longing to become a martyr. Jake's blog accounts paint a picture of self-radicalisation but it's highly likely that new friends and mentors played a key role in turning him towards jihadi extremism. He alludes to some of this on his blog whilst arguing that others who influenced him were not responsible for his radicalisation. In writing this he may have been seeking to shift any blame away from the Hume Islamic Youth Centre, where he was an occasional visitor.

Hume Islamic Youth Centre (HIYC) is a branch of the ASWJ network and, whilst not known for openly advocating violent extremism, it has been connected with some extremist figures. One such figure formerly active at the Hume Islamic Youth Centre is Sheikh Koder Soueid. Sheikh Koder was born and raised in Melbourne but studied Islamic jurisprudence in Medina. His Facebook page regularly praises Islamic State and condemns the West's war on terror. At least five young foreign fighters we know

about had previously been active at the Hume Islamic Youth Centre, including Adam Dahman.

Another recent foreign fighter known to have spent time at HIYC is Suhan Rahman, who left Melbourne shortly before completing his building degree at RMIT. Although shortly to graduate and engaged to be married, Suhan left his moderate Bangladeshi family in Melbourne and turned up in Syria in the company of Mohamed Elomar before being reported as having been killed in fighting.

It is not known what role HIYC or any of its teachers played in the radicalisation of these young men, but it seems that at the very least it served as a happy hunting ground for some terrorist recruiters. In other cases where radicalisation appears to have occurred very rapidly and involved young men from an otherwise non-extremist mainstream background, very little or nothing is known about their recruiters. Such is the case with Sharky Jama, who was regarded as a role model within his Melbourne ethnic Somali community. Although Somali youth had been preyed upon by recruiters for more than a decade both in connection with al-Shabaab and more recently IS, little is known about what influenced Sharky to turn his back on a promising career as a male model and a vibrant social life and embrace religious extremism. It appears that in recent months Sharky had become involved with al-Furqan and had been befriended by Junaid Thorne. Sharky's story only came to light when his death whilst fighting in Syria was reported in April 2015. His own father remains mystified by what happened to his son but chose to speak out and warn others in the community of what could happen to their children.

Mahmoud Abdullatif's story follows a familiar path. The handsome Melbourne man was known to party hard and had a series of girlfriends, before suddenly turning towards a fundamentalist understanding of Islam and leaving Melbourne to fight with IS in Syria. Along the way he attracted the attention of Melbourne teenager Zehra Duman. Zehra' father, Duvat Duman, said that within the space of several months his daughter's character had changed dramatically. She began to post angry, hateful rants against non-Muslims and Australian society; something which was out of character for the girl, who had gone to a mainstream Turkish school and previously shown no signs of extremism. She connected online with Abdullatif and appears to have fallen head-over-heels in love with him, travelling to Syria to marry him and become a jihadi bride. Just six weeks after the union, Abdullatif was killed and Zehra posted extensively about her grief and pride for her martyred husband. She continues to post prolifically from Raqqah, urging other young women to join her and engaging in question-and-answer sessions about the challenges that they face and the rich opportunities that are open to them.

A little bit more is known about the mysterious case of the apparently-successful young doctor Tareq Kamleh. When an Islamic State propaganda video began to circulate in late April 2015, Tareq's former colleagues quickly recognised the smiling

doctor speaking to the camera from a paediatric ward in a Raqqah hospital. The slickly-produced propaganda video runs for more than fifteen minutes and is mostly in Arabic, promoting the virtues of Islamic State and the Islamic State health service, conveying an eerie sense of normalcy and legitimacy. At first Tareq's colleagues and friends were at a loss to explain his sudden change in behaviour. It quickly came to light that whilst posted to the small city of Mackay in North Queensland, Tareq had undergone a sudden transformation from being a hard-drinking and popular, if rather narcissistic and immature, womaniser to declaring that he was going to become serious about his faith.

For years Tareq, who was born in Perth and studied in New Zealand and Adelaide before being posted around the country, appeared to be avoiding his parents. Friends say that when they visited him at Adelaide University, Tareq put up a front of being an observant Muslim. Tareq's mother was born in Germany and raised as a Roman Catholic but converted to Islam to marry Tareq's Palestinian father. By many accounts, she became very fastidious in observing strictly what she understood to be the tenets of her new faith. Tareq's sudden change of behaviour came after mysterious friends turned up in Mackay and took him on a camping trip. After that camping trip Tareq was transformed. He returned to Perth in 2014 before leaving at the end of the year to travel to Syria. Little more is known about his case, but he appears to have been targeted by skilful recruiters who knew how to engage with his weaknesses, self-doubt and guilt.

A little more is known about the case of Neil Prakash, a Melbourne boy born to an Indian-Fijian father and an Australian-Cambodian mother who came to find discipline and purpose in Islam via the al-Furqan Centre in south-east Melbourne. We know a little more about Prakash's story because he appeared in a video released by IS in April 2015. Like most official IS videos, Prakash's video is artfully shot and skilfully post-produced. Prakash himself, as he speaks to the camera, is not as slick and polished as the video that he appears in but his lack of natural eloquence is balanced by a sense of authenticity and sincerity. In the first half of the video he speaks of his personal journey growing up with a mother who struggled with schizophrenia and was unable to care for him herself, and finding purpose in his new friendship circle around al-Furqan and in learning about Islam. Neil Prakash was a protégé of Mohammad Ali Baryalei's and after Baryalei's death in October 2014, he took over the role of being IS's most senior Australian recruiter based in Syria (Maley and Stewart 2015).

Prakash appears to have played some role in the alleged Anzac Day plot that was uncovered a week prior to the April 25 centenary commemoration of the Gallipoli landings. The two young men who were arrested in what became known as Operation Rising were both friends of Neil's and were influenced by him to undertake the planned attack on Anzac Day. It is alleged that the attack would have involved running over a uniformed police officer with a car, slitting his throat whilst filming it and then taking his pistol and going on a shooting rampage before going out in a blaze of glory.

We have some sense of the role played by individuals like Baryalei and Neil and of centres like al-Risalah and al-Furqan but what remains unclear is if there lies a network behind them, invisible and unknown. Recruiters like Baryalei and Neil – rough and ready as they are – are effective at engaging with their peers, but looking further at the pattern of radicalisation it appears that there are expert recruiters involved both on the ground in Australia, where the numbers are thought to range between eight and thirty, and abroad in Syria, Turkey and Iraq where social media, and encrypted communications keep them connected in a virtual community of jihadi recruiters, foreign fighters and would-be recruits. The pull of Islamic State comes not just through slick messaging and artful propaganda, but also through targeted recruiting and predatory engagement with young men and women open to persuasion and hungry for affirmation.

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Indonesian Youth: Religious-Linked Violence and Terrorism

Azyumardi Azra

Arguably, there has been only limited discussion of the issue of the involvement of a number of Indonesian Muslim youth in radicalism and terrorism. One can refer to a few research conducted by such institutions as the PPIM and CSRC UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, and LAKIP that showed the tendency of increased radicalism among youth—senior high school and university students in some university campuses and senior secondary schools in Indonesia.

There is no, however, credible data as to how many Indonesian youth were (and still are) involved in the act of terrorism. I would suggest that their number is quite small among the rank-and-file as well as among the operatives of the radicals on the ground. The involvement of some Indonesia youth in terrorist acts, including suicide bombings, is indeed a new phenomenon in the largely moderate tradition of Indonesian Islam and, therefore, is very alarming.

Indonesian Muslim Youth and Terrorism

In Indonesia the terms used to refer to youth are "*remaja*" (adolescent) and *pemuda* (youth); all of them are called "*generasi muda*" (young generation). According to Indonesian Law on Youth No 40/2009, youth are those who are in the ages between 16 to 30 years old (article 1). Therefore, they should be in the productive period of life in society, rather than being involved in radical and terrorist acts.

The number of youth in Indonesia is for sure very big. According to the national census of Indonesian Central Statistical Bureau (BPS) in 2010—during which time the Indonesian total population was 237,556,363—the number of young people in the ages between 15-19 years old was 20,871,086 and between 20-24 was 19,878,417. Their total number—excluding those between 25-30 years old—was 40,749,503. According to the data of the National Commission of General Election in 2014 (during which time the estimated Indonesian total population reached 245 million), the number of first-time voters (between 17-20 years old) was roughly 14 million, and that between 20-30 years old was 45.6 million.

For sure, the vast majority of Indonesian youth is Muslim. Again, according to the BPS, the national census of 2010 found that Muslims represent 87.18 per cent of the

Indonesian total population. And it is also certain that the number of Muslim youth who were (and probably still are) involved in radical and terroristic acts is very, very small indeed—only a handful compared to the large number of Muslim youth as a whole who live their lives in a peaceful way.

By using those criteria, there is only a limited number of youth involved in terrorism. The youth, according to the age limit, are those who were born in the second half of the 1980s. Based on this age limit, most of the perpetrators of the bombing incidents are adults.

Take the case of the bombers of the 2002 first Bali bombing. They were no longer youth: Imam Samudra (born 1970), Ali Ghufron (born 1960), Amrozi (born 1962), and Ali Imron (born 1977).

One can also consider some other terrorists. For instance, Muhammad Syarif, a suicide bomber at the Cirebon Police headquarter, was no longer a youth; he was 32 years old when he brought suicidal bombs into the mosque during Friday prayer—the only case of suicide bombing in an Indonesian mosque. The situation is the same with Pepi Fernando, who sent a number of bombs in books to a number of institutions; he was no longer *remaja* or *generasi muda* as he was born in 1979 (cf. Makruf 2014; Makruf & Pratiwi 2012).

In Bali bombing II (2005), there were some bombers who were youth, like Muhammad Cholily a.k.a. Hanif a.k.a. Yahya Anthony (28), Arif Solchanuddin a.k.a. Pendek bin Suyadi (24), Abdul Aziz a.k.a Jafar (30), and Dwi Widiyarto a.k.a. Sigit a.k.a. Bambang bin Pramono (34). Youth bombers were suspected behind the J.W. Marriot Mega Kuningan Jakarta bombing in July 2009; two of them who gave recorded testimony were Dani Dwi Permana (18) and Nana Ihwa Maulana (28).

Looking at these cases, one can suggest that there is a kind of mix between adult and youth in the terrorist acts. It seems that the youth are not the simple majority of the bombers. But for sure, the youth represent a significant proportion of the bombers. In the latest cases of bombings, there is a tendency that the perpetrators are getting younger and younger.

Despite the uncertain number of youth involved in terrorist acts, there can be no doubt that the Muslim young generation has become the single most important target of the terrorist groups and cells to recruit and radicalize. The youth are most prone to radical ideas because of their naive idealistic view of Islam and the world that unfortunately is combined with a lack of proper understanding of Islam. In addition, rapid social, cultural, economic and political changes that have been taking place in Indonesia since the mid-1990s have contributed greatly to disorientation and displacement of the youth, making them even more prone to radical ideas and praxis.

The Indonesian Muslim youth has been the main target of the infiltration and recruitment of literal-minded and radical groups even during the heyday of Soeharto authoritarianism, particularly since the 1990s onwards (Azra 2005b). University

campuses and senior high schools became the recruiting ground for the radicals almost without check from the authorities of the universities and schools.

Why did university campuses and schools become the target of recruitment? I would suggest that this is because of several reasons. One of the most important reason is the relative decline of extra-campuses or extra-school organizations that used to play a very important role in strengthening the moderate Islamic vision of the youth. At the same time, intra-campus organizations had also become very weak after the implementation of the policy of Normalization of Campus Life (Normalisasi Kehidupan Kampus/NKK) introduced by the Ministry of National Education in the late 1970s following massive student demonstrations on a number of university campuses across the country against the increased encroachment of the Soeharto regime.

The locus of recruitment of the radicals was mostly the campus mosques. Arguably the prototype of this mosque was the Salman Mosque of the Bandung Institute of Technology (Institut Teknologi Bandung/ITB), the most prestigious technological university in Indonesia. Under the leadership of Imaduddin Abdurrahim, a former rightist-leaning leader of the Association of University Muslim Students (Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam/HMI), the Salman Mosque became the centre of Muslim student activism, introducing a new kind of Islamic conservatism.

The forerunners of radical groups, albeit very tiny, were the *usrah* (family) that was led by an unquestioned *amir* (leader); all of the young *jama'ah* (flock) must obey him blindly. They had a strong orientation to what they called the "Islamic way of life", and condemned the Indonesian rulers as "*taghut*" (Phara'onic rulers) and, therefore, rejected their authority. That is why they burned their ID cards and conducted marriages through their *amir* without registration at the Office of [Islamic] Religious Affairs.

Before long, the *usrah* declined and was replaced by the organization named Tarbiyah that had been planted by the Salman and other mosques in public university campuses. Having a lot of affinities with the *usrah* in terms of their ideology of Islamic neo-conservatism and methods of training, the Tarbiyah, which seemed to be more organized, soon gained momentum among university students, particularly those studying at "secular" public universities such as the Bandung Institute of Technology (Institut Teknologi Bandung/ITB), Bogor Institute of Agriculture (Institut Pertanian Bogor/IPB), Gadjah Mada University (UGM) of Jogjakarta, Universitas Indonesia (UI) and many more. In a later development, the Tarbiyah softened their tone and adopted a neo-conservative understanding and practice of Islam rather than become more radical. The Tarbiyah has been suggested as the forerunner of the Islamic-based party Partai Keadilan Sejahtera/PKS (Justice and Welfare Party) in the post-Soeharto liberal democracy (Rahmat 2008; Nashir 2007; [al-Makassary 2014: 30-32]).

Arguably, the most active radical-minded group since the time of President Soeharto in the 1980s until today is the Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI). Because of the repression of the regime, the HTI went underground. They seemed to be a special target

of the Soeharto military because of their two main doctrines: first, the establishment of a universal caliphate (*khilafah*), and second, the application of Islamic law (*shari'ah*) in Indonesia. These two doctrines fought for by the HTI run contrary to the fact that Indonesia is based on Pancasila (Five Pillars), which gives no room for the adoption of *shari'ah*.

Despite their neo-conservatism or radicalism, it is important to bear in mind that all these groups mentioned had not been involved in violence, let alone terrorism. Basically they are peaceful. I would suggest that this peaceful approach was adopted because they believed that otherwise they would be crushed by the Soeharto regime and also because it was in line with the preference of the majority of Indonesian Muslims, who traditionally, in accordance with the Sunni political concept and practice, prefer a peaceful approach.

The democratic opening beginning in 1998, with Soeharto's resignation from his long-held power of 32 years, unleashed the literal-minded, neo-conservative and radical groups in Indonesia. The euphoria of democracy that took place simultaneously with the weakening of the central government and the failure of the state to enforce law and order, created a lot space for them. At the same time, increased globalization saw the free introduction of literal and radical interpretations of Islam in Indonesia.

Again, all these groups made the youth, particularly on university campuses and in senior secondary schools, their main targets. In addition, they also operated to recruit unemployed graduates from university or drop-outs from schools. Uncertain democratic political transition combined with economic hardship made the youth more vulnerable to the idealistic rhetoric of the literal-minded and radicals.

Before long the international situation provided a strong impetus for them to assert themselves. The horrific events of "Nine-Eleven" (2001) in the USA, followed by the American and allies' military operation in Afghanistan soon enough radicalized these groups, which resulted, among other incidents, in the Bali bombing I (2002), followed by some other bombings and violence in various parts of Indonesia.

Root Causes of Violence and Terrorism

Is there any connection between religion—particularly Islam—with radicalism and terrorism? Particularly in Indonesia, as have been shown above, Muslim youth are more prone to radical ideas and terrorism. Even though the number of youth who have been (still some are) involved in radical and terroristic groups is relatively tiny, it remains important to pose the question as to how the involvement of some youth will affect the future of Islam in the country with the largest Muslim population in the world.

Addressing the issue on the relations between Islam and radicalism or terrorism, one should not fail to observe that there are certain verses in the Qur'an that could contain or could incite radicalism. But they must not be taken as the true representation of the correct understanding of Islam, for there is no doubt that the essence of Islam is

peace on earth. There are of course Muslim individuals or groups who wage violence, terrorism, and even war in the name of Islam; but, again, they are not representatives of this religion. In fact they are misleading and are on the fringe of Islam. The bulk majority of adherents of Islam are peace-loving people who respect diversity and pluralism.

Therefore, I would suggest that viewing Islam—and by extension any other religion—as the main root cause of radicalism and terrorism can be very misleading. One should try not to associate Islam or any particular religion with violence and terrorism. Radicalization of adherents of Islam and certain religions—as I will discuss below—is the result of various factors that often have nothing to with religion and God.

There is little doubt that the root causes of radicalism, violence or terrorism among youth in particular in the name of religion are very complex. As suggested above, there is some kind of combination of various factors including politics, economics, and to some extent also certain teachings or interpretation of religions. In most cases, politics seems to be the most important factor (cf. Azra 2005a). Based on some cases of terrorism in Indonesia, such as the Bali I (2002), Jakarta Marriot (2003), Kuningan Jakarta (2004), Bali II (2005), and Marriot II and Ritz Carlton (2009) bombings—to mention some—it is obvious that politics, both domestic and international, are the main root causes of terrorism.

At the domestic level, the perpetrators of the bombings were motivated by their anger and hatred of the Indonesian political system that they regarded as being "un-Islamic". This was particularly true when Megawati Soekarnoputri was the president of the Republic of Indonesia (2001-2004). For them it is unlawful for a woman to become the leader (*imam*) of a state in which the vast majority of the population is Muslim. In the latest case of bombings at American-chain hotels (2009), there was evidence that the perpetrators of the bombings made President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono their new target.

As for international politics, it is clear that even before the tragic events of September 11, 2001, in the USA, the Muslim perpetrators of terrorism had condemned certain injustices in international politics and relations. For them the US and other Western countries are the enemies of Islam and Muslims: Western countries, particularly the US, are basically hostile to Islam and the Muslim world. In fact, they believe that the US and other allied Western countries—under the influence of what they call "Jewish Zionist lobbies"—have conspired to destroy Islam and Muslims. A number of international cases, such as the US's continued support of Israel at the expense of the Palestinians, and the US military campaign in and occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq that continue up till today, have only added fuel to their anger and hatred of the US and its allies.

Therefore, Islam is seldom the main, let alone the only, cause of terrorism. Politics, economics, and other non-religious factors, however, in turn can easily receive religious justification when the perpetrators of any kind of terrorist act put forward certain

interpretations and understanding of Islamic teachings. The use, abuse, and manipulation of religious justifications are potentially more significant in Islam, which does not have a single body of religious authority.

From a doctrinal point of view, I realize of course that certain doctrines of Islam could be used and abused by certain Muslims for justifying acts of violence and terrorism. Certain verses of the Qur'an and the Tradition (*Hadith*) of the Prophet Muhammad are prone to be interpreted that way. Indeed, there exist religious interpretations and understandings in that line. The absence of a single authority in Islam—particularly among the Sunni—makes it very difficult, if not impossible, to issue a religious ruling (*fatwa*) that would decide once and for all that terrorism as *jihad* is religiously unjustifiable and invalid.

Radical and terrorist leaders take only certain verses that fit their own purposes and ignore the others. This is what they do with Qur'anic verses related to *jihad* for instance. Therefore, they can easily take and preach a misleading and one-sided doctrine of *jihad* as justification to conduct violence and holy war against any perceived enemies, including even other Muslims, particularly the top leaders, whom they perceive as "*thaghut*" ("Pharaonic leaders").

Not least important is the precedent in Islamic history of radical acts that can be included in the definition of terrorism. The radical acts and terrorism conducted by the Kharijis (Seceders) in the post-Prophet Muhammad period, for instance, have in fact continuously inspired many, if not most, contemporary radical Muslim groups—they could be called "neo-Khariji" groups. There indeed exist certain radical ideologies among Muslims which basically believe that it is religiously valid to conduct such radical and terrorist acts.

Therefore, there is an urgent need among concerned Muslim scholars ("*ulama*") to rethink, reinterpret, and reformulate certain interpretation of classical and medieval "*ulama*" concerning *jihad*, for instance. For that purpose the "*ulama*" and Muslims in general first of all must discard the defensive and apologetic attitude that is apparent when they respond to terrorist acts conducted by certain individuals or Muslim groups. They should admit that there are indeed terrorists among Muslims who, based on their understanding of Islam, conduct terrorism. Admitting this problem, the "*ulama*" could then proceed to address the issue objectively from a religious point of view.

Religious-linked violence and terrorism, like those that happened in Indonesia, basically cannot be associated with the state, creating state terrorism. Most radical groups in contrast are opposed to the state; they are originally non-state activists of obscure backgrounds. Moreover, they are, as a rule, outside of mainstream Muslim movements and organizations. In fact, they have bitterly criticized mainstream Muslims as having been too accommodating and compromising to what they regarded as "un-Islamic" political, social, cultural, and economic realities (cf. Azra 2006).

There was a tendency, however, that certain radical individuals or groups could be recruited by or have certain links or connections with persons in the government or military. This is not new in Indonesia. The terrorists hijack of a Garuda Indonesia airplane in Bangkok during the Soeharto period, for instance, was conducted by terrorists of ex-Islamic state movements (NII, or Negara Islam Indonesia) in the 1950s who were recruited by certain of Soeharto's generals to launch the so-called "*komando jihad*" (*jihad* command). There have been a lot of indications that certain military elements have incited and manipulated certain radical groups in the post-Soeharto period in order to discredit Islam and Muslim organizations.

Religious-linked violence and terrorism is clearly not unique to Islam. One can find throughout human history a great number of terrorist groups conducting various kinds of terrorism that are in one way or another linked with certain religions. With increased globalization and the instant flow of information and news that create a great deal of anomalies, the radicalization of religious individuals and groups tend to have accelerated.

Again, religions without central authorities are of course more prone to violence and terrorism. But, religions with central authorities could also become prone, because of the decline of their respective religious authorities and the de-centering of religious authority and leadership.

It seems that a literal and *sharia*-oriented (*zahir*) understanding of Islam is also more prone to radicalism. This kind of religious understanding as a rule creates some clear boundaries even among Muslims. Those who are opposed to their understanding are in fact regarded by them as having gone astray and, therefore, are targets of *jihad* (war). This can be seen clearly in the cases of the Wahabis in the late 18th-century Arabia and the Padris of West Sumatra in the early decades of the 19th century. The Salafi groups today that subscribe to a literal and puritanical understanding of Islam are equally prone to be radical.

The non-literal understanding of Islam, such as represented by Sufism, is more immune to violence. This is mainly because of the strong emphasis that Sufism puts on inclusiveness and the "inner" (*batin*) aspect of Islam. Even though the Sufis—like the literalists—also often appeal for purification of religious acts, they do it in a peaceful manner through spiritual exercises rather than by using force, like the approach adopted by the literalists. There were of course cases of "radical" Sufi groups and *tariqah* people that launched *jihad* against the colonial rulers during the age of colonialism; but that kind of "Sufi radicalism" is almost absent in post-colonial Islam.

Jihad and Suicide Bombings

Despite all the explanations of the true meaning of *"jihad"* as espoused by Indonesian mainstream "*ulama*", Muslim intellectual figures and organizations, it is clear that radical groups that operate openly and terrorist groups that work underground continually

abuse and manipulate the doctrines of *"jihad"* for achieving their ends. Worse still, they manipulate the doctrines to justify the act of suicide bombings, which in the end have victimized a good number of innocent people, including Muslims.

Suicide acts, as mentioned earlier and also as Jamhari (2005) shows, is not a new phenomenon. Suicide acts in order to kill enemies or even innocent people have been conducted since classical and medieval times by a number of radical groups. For instance, there was a Jewish radical sect that conducted suicidal acts in their confrontation with Rome. The Shi'ite assassins also used terrorism to assassinate their opponents. In fact the very words "assassinate", "assassination" and "assassin" came from this particular *ghulat* (Shi'ite radical group) (Lewis 1967). Then, in modern times we had the Japanese *"kamikaze"* pilots in their Pacific war against the US. There were also suicide bombers among the Sri Lankan Tamil Tigers, who became, in fact, the prototypes of later suicide bombings, including among Muslims. The list can be very long.

Radical Islamic groups in the Middle East, in their confrontation with the Israelis, in particular, have accepted suicide bombing as a justified method. They regarded suicide bombing as the "willingness to die as an act of ultimate devotion [to God] in a defensive holy war". To support this view, Fathi Shiqaqi, a founder of "Islamic Jihad", in 1988 formulated guidelines for martyrdom (*shahid*) using human bombs. Quoting Qur'anic verses (3:40-45), Shiqaqi asserted that God admires martyrs (including suicide bombers), but not those who commit suicide for personal reasons (Jamhari 2005).

The phenomenon of suicide bombings in Indonesia is relatively new. It began with the Marriott bombings, followed by bombings at the front of the Australian Embassy and Bali II and beyond. The young perpetrators of the bombings were clearly suicide bombers. And it is clear as well from the video produced and left by the young bombers of the Bali bombing II (2005) and Marriot-Ritz Carlton (2009) that their ruthless acts were also inspired by the misunderstood and twisted meaning of *"jihad"*.

Many Indonesian would hate to believe that there are suicide bombers among themselves. First of all, the vast majority of Indonesian Muslims believe that the kind of Islam they subscribe to is an "*Islam wasatiyah*" (middle path, or rather moderate) that gives only a little room for extremism and radicalism. Second, Indonesian Muslims by and large believe that suicide bombings are *haram*, or prohibited by Islam; there is a great deal of Islamic teaching that emphatically prohibits Muslims from committing suicide as well as to kill innocent people, regardless of their religion. Third, there is no reason whatsoever to commit such acts in Indonesia, a Muslim country where Muslims enjoy freedom under regimes that show no hostility to both Islam and Muslims. Since the second half of the Soeharto regime in the 1990s up until the current government, Islam and Indonesian Muslims in fact have been the largest component of the government.

It is important to point out that following the Bali bombing I (October 2002), the Council of Indonesian Ulama (Majelis Ulama Indonesia/MUI) issued two very

important *fatwa*s. First is a *fatwa* that prohibits terrorism in the name of *jihad*. It stated that the equation of *jihad* with the conduct of violence, let alone terrorism, ran contrary to the very nature of Islam as a religion of peace. The second *fatwa* is the emphatic prohibition of suicide bombing, precisely because Islam prohibits committing suicide and killing non-combatant and innocent people.

It is regrettable that for certain reasons the two important *fatwa*s failed to reach a wider audience of Indonesian Muslims. As a result, Indonesian Muslims in general have a very obscure idea about the true meaning of *jihad* in the midst of continuing violence and terrorism, committed by others through suicide bombings in Indonesia and in other Muslim countries and elsewhere. It is not surprising therefore that they have seemingly assumed that terrorism and suicide bombings conducted in the name of defending Islam and Muslims from the increased encroachment of certain Western countries are somewhat acceptable or at least can be condoned; that is also why there does not seem to be enough strong condemnation coming from mainstream Muslims against violence and terrorism conducted in the name of Islam.

The momentum for the reassertion and reconfirmation of the two *fatwa*s gained momentum in the aftermath of the Bali bombing II (October 1, 2005). In conjunction with the celebration of Id al-Fitri, Indonesian Vice-President Muhammad Jusuf Kalla invited a number of Muslim leaders to his official residence (November 17, 2005), where he showed the audience a video of the four perpetrators of the bombing. In the video, the four suicide bombers asserted that they would conduct *jihad* by putting bombs somewhere in Indonesia; that they would go to paradise to meet *bidadari;* and that later they would be accompanied by 70 members of their families and relatives. The unexpected revelation obviously stunned all of the Muslim leaders present in the residence of the Vice-President; in the end they agreed to form the Tim Penanggulangan Terrorisme through Religious Approach (TPT, or Anti-Terrorism Team—through religious approach) chaired by KH Ma'ruf Amin, a respected "ulama" and also a national leader of the MUI (Council of Indonesian Ulama). Ma`ruf Amin is assisted by a number of vice-chairpersons who represent mainstream Muslim organizations and institutions.

As formulated in its first meeting one week later, the TPT aims to: first, reformulate and disseminate the true and valid concept of *jihad* and the fact that terrorism and suicide bombing run contrary to the teachings of Islam; second, conduct research on literature that contain misleading concepts and understandings of *jihad,* such as that outlined in a book written by Imam Samudra, one of the perpetrators of Bali bombing I, who has been sentenced to death by a Bali court. The TPT, in the words of Ma'ruf Amin, will produce contra-arguments and pocket-books that succinctly delineate the true meaning of *jihad*.

Since its formation, the TPT has been active not only in research and writing about the true doctrine of *jihad*, but also in conducting public lectures and seminars, particularly among *pesantren* circles in a number of places in Java and Sumatra. The

seminars are attended by *kiyai*s and teachers of *pesantren*s as well as by representatives of Muslim organizations. The seminar that was conducted in Yogyakarta towards the end of January 2006 that involved representatives of Abu Bakar Baasyir's Ngruki Pesantren, for instance, is worth mentioning as a case in point. The seminar began with strong suspicion about and a hostile attitude towards the TPT, followed by heated debates among the audience that in the end resulted in some kind of understanding that terrorism and suicide bombing are absolutely prohibited in Islam; and that all related institutions should do their best to prevent students and other young Muslims from being recruited by terrorist groups to become suicide bombers.

The formation and activities of the TPT, I would like to argue, is very important for several reasons. Mainstream "ulama" and Muslim organizations had been the target of strong criticism for their rather passive attitude towards confronting increased violence and terrorism conducted by certain individuals and groups in the name of *jihad* and Islam. Their passivity, for certain critics, seems to indirectly condone such ruthless acts. The TPT realizes that it is probably very difficult to win back those who are already misled by a misleading understanding of *jihad* for they have been brainwashed by certain intellectual actors of terrorism, but the TPT feels that it is necessary to protect young Muslims from being misled and converted to suicide bombers by terrorist groups.

Conclusion

The phenomenon of religious radicalism, violence and suicide bombing among youth is a complex one. It is related not only to a misleading and invalid understanding of *jihad*, but also to other factors such as the increased disorientation and dislocation among the most vulnerable segments of society, particularly the youth. Therefore, preventing young people from being suicide bombers needs concerted efforts by various leading sectors of the state and society.

It is also clear that throughout Indonesian history the doctrine of *jihad* has been used and abused for different purposes. A number of factors have been responsible for the appeal of *jihad*, including internal crises within the Muslim society and government, and external factors like the perceived war against Islam and Muslims conducted by certain Western powers.

The use and abuse of *jihad* has taken place in the past, and could continue among Muslims in the future. To anticipate that, it is necessary for "*ulama*" and other concerned Muslim leaders to reformulate a more contextual kind of *jihad*. Otherwise, the *jihad* could and would be equated with radicalism, violence and terrorism like the tendency today.

To address the Muslim youth specifically, it is important that the people responsible for university campuses and schools pay closer attention to their students' activities. Unsupervised academic freedom simply means giving greater room for infiltration by

radicals to recruit students. Therefore, religious bodies and programmes and mosques on university campuses and schools should not be managed fully only by students. Credible and responsible lecturers and teachers should be involved in order to ensure that all run in the right direction.

At the same time there is an urgent need to revitalize students' bodies and organizations both on and off campuses and schools. On-campus organizations like Intra-School Students' Organization (Organisasi Siswa Intra-Sekolah/OSIS), and [University] Students Executive Body (Badan Eksekutif Mahasiswa/BEM), particularly their Islamic study groups, should be more watchful of possible radical infiltration. It is already known that these Islamic study groups within OSIS and BEM are prone to infiltration by radicals who, as a rule, send their best preachers to attract the youth.

Similarly, off-campus organizations like the Association of University Muslim Students (Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam/HMI), Indonesian Muslim Student Movement (Pergerakan Mahasiswa Islam Indonesia/PMII), Muhammadiyah Student Association (Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah/IMM), and Indonesian Muslim High School Student Association and many other similar organizations should also be revitalized. They should reorientate themselves from being too political to academic. It is a strong tendency that more and more students are no longer interested in these organizations because they have become more interested in political issues than in the students' needs and interests.

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Terrorism and Youth in South Asia

Rajeshwari Krishnamurthy

INTRODUCTION

South Asia is a region whose countries – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka– share remarkable historical, social, cultural, political and civilisational histories, and yet is one of the least integrated groupings. Interestingly, the factors of common experiences that have tied these countries in intricately woven relationships over several centuries are also among the key reasons for this region's jarring absence of integration and comprehensive cooperation.

Demographically, South Asia is home to substantial numbers of practitioners of five major religions – Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Sikhism – their sub-sects, and numerous other religions. Ethnically, linguistically, socially, economically, and culturally too the diversity that exists and thrives in this region is staggering.

Collectively, South Asia houses 1.6 billion people[1], approximately 24% of the world's population. Women constitute approximately 49%[2] and men constitute approximately 51%; and the youth (ages 10-24) constitute approximately 30%[3] of the region's total population.

Although South Asian countries have been democracies for the most past, the democratic temper among the polity and the peoples have constantly been under strain, especially given the differences in the types of governances that exist in the individual countries. For instance, Nepal and Bhutan were monarchies until recently; Pakistan, although founded as a democratic nation, became an Islamic republic; Afghanistan became an Islamic republic; Sri Lanka was a borderline totalitarian state with Sinhala nationalism trumping all till January 2015; the Maldives, although not an Islamic republic in name, has a heavy influence of Islamic jurisprudence in its laws; Bangladesh,

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[1] "Population, Total [2010-2014]." The World Bank. Accessed March 13, 2015. http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL.

[2] "Population, Female (% of Total) [2010-2014]." The World Bank. Accessed March 13, 2015. http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL.FE.ZS.

[3] Clifton, Donna, and Alexandra Hervish. "The World's Youth 2013 Data Sheet." The Population Reference Bureau. January 1, 2013. Accessed February 11, 2015. http://www.prb.org/pdf13/youth-data-sheet-2013.pdf.

despite being a Muslim-majority country, has largely tried to remain secular and egalitarian (not without hiccups); and India, the largest country in the region, has remained a secular democratic republic for the most part (with hiccups being social and not constitutional).

All these countries have witnessed their share of political upheavals and fluxes, coups, violent social disharmony, and economic and climate-related problems that have heavily impacted intra-regional and inter-communal relationships negatively.

Since 1945, South Asia has witnessed and continues to endure various phases and types of religious and ideological radicalism, violent extremism, terrorism, ethnic rivalries, and armed conflicts that have been carried out by non-state actors and state actors as well as the two types of actors collaborating with each other covertly and/or overtly for political and/or social gain.

Collectively, as seen over the past 40 years, the region's contribution in manpower to terrorist outfits located and operating within and outside the region has been quite high. However, despite the asymmetric nature of geographical expanses and population sizes, this contribution, when charted country-wise, has been visibly disproportional.

It is in this backdrop that the problem of terrorism and the increasing sentiment of religious and ideological radicalism, and the extremism and terrorism motivated by it among the youth, must be studied.

This paper will focus on the phenomenon of radicalism and terrorist recruitment among the youth, and will proceed to address questions on related issues, with a specific focus on the workings of the terrorist group, the Islamic State (IS). In essence, this paper attempts to address questions on the nature of radicalisation among the South Asian youth, and whether and how answers can be found to counter radicalism using lessons learnt from the South Asian narratives.

This author projects that although the IS is unlikely to repeat its successes in Syria and Iraq in South Asia, the threat is still real and with potential for tremendous negative implications.

This paper therefore attempts to chart this phenomenon via answering the following questions:

1. How are young people recruited and radicalised?

2. Why are they vulnerable? What are the reasons for their recruitment into extremist groups?

3. What role do socio-economic and religious factors play in this process?

4. What are the various tools used for terrorist recruitment? What role do social media play?

5. How have the states responded to radicalisation and terrorist recruitment?

6. Are there lessons to be learnt from the Indian experience, given how India's approximately 140 million-strong Muslim population has largely remained moderate and removed from radicalisation?

I. Radicalisation and Recruitment of Youth to Extremist Groups

Today, more often than not, the term *radicalisation* has become synonymous with Islamist terrorism. However, this narrow interpretation of radicalisation also fuels the problems we as a global community face. According to Alex S. Wilner and Claire-Jehanne Dubouloz, "[r]adicalization is a personal process in which individuals adopt extreme political, social, and/or religious ideals and aspirations, and where the attainment of particular goals justifies the use of indiscriminate violence. It is both a mental and emotional process that prepares and motivates an individual to pursue violent behaviour."[4]

This definition is broad and encompasses all reasons and motivations for radicalisation. South Asia's grand scale of socio-political, socio-economic, and politico-economic issues makes it extremely essential for the broadness of the aforementioned definition to be borne in mind while analysing radicalisation and violent extremism.

In South Asia, levels of radicalism among the youth are visibly rising, predominantly in Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist communities[5]. However, one must not look at the rise in radicalism via a religious lens alone, sans the country context. Contrary to common perception, religious priorities aren't decided by monolithic structures. National, social, cultural, ethnic and circumstantial motivators play huge and key roles in both fuelling or diluting radicalism, and the goals and trajectories of radicalised individuals and groups. Radicalisation of one group can set off radicalisation in another group that feels threatened by the former's. This generates an unending vicious cycle of radicalisation that often only leads to sinister ends – and South Asia is home to many such examples.

Radicalisation among Muslim Youth in South Asia

South Asia is home to numerous sects and sub-sects of those who follow the Islamic faith, such as, *inter alia*, Sunnis, Shias, Sufis, Barelvis, Ahmadiyyas, Khojas, Bohris etc. Numerically, the Sunni Muslim population is greater than the Shia Muslims, and

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[4] Wilner, Alex, and Claire-Jehanne Dubouloz. "Three Precursors of Homegrown Radicalization." In *Homegrown Terrorism and Transformative Learning: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Understanding Radicalization*, 38. 1st ed. Vol. 22. Taylor & Francis, 2010.

[5] This author acknowledges that Hindu and Buddhist radicalism are increasing exponentially too, and that they do pose a credible threat to the region's stability. However, this paper, for reasons of specificity, will be unable to discuss this phenomenon in detail.

the same can be applied to the sub-sects and sub-sub-sects. The level of radicalisation with potential for violent extremism is predominantly visible among the Sunni Muslims of the region, and most prominently in Pakistan – where Islamist groups not only fight against other religious groups, but also indulge in sectarian violence. The Maldivian polity has always had shades of Islamism, but, despite a large number of Maldivians joining international terrorist groups, the general populace can, at the most, be classified as conservative, and not radicalised towards violent extremism. Bangladesh, although moderate for the most part, has begun to witness a steady rise in radicalisation in the past few years. Indian Muslims, who at approximately 13.4% (140 million members)[6] constitute a substantial chunk of the country's population, have, barring a few instances, for the most part had a stellar record vis-à-vis aversion to violent extremism – and sectarian conflict is seldom heard of despite the presence of several sects and sub-sects. The Muslim community in Sri Lanka too isn't radicalised, but conservatism bearing Saudi Arabian shades is seeping in. Religious radicalisation in Afghanistan was strongest in the 1990s-2000s era but although radicalisation still continues, it would be wrong to say it is increasing in the country – for today, there is a robust movement among the peoples to rebuild their country. Comparatively, Nepal and Bhutan have negligible Islamist radicalisation.

The rise of extremist radicalism in Muslim communities is visible primarily in Pakistan, followed by the Maldives, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and India.

In this setting, although there is visible radicalisation among youth belonging to all the three predominant religions in the neighbourhood, statistically[7], youth belonging to the Muslim community has been recruited by terrorist groups the most.

From the trends visible in discourses in the public domain over various issues, it may appear that more and more youth from various backgrounds are getting radicalised and at a quicker pace.

However, one must note that while radicalisation is taking place exponentially, the assumption that every radicalised individual will become a violent extremist would be a flawed judgment that could lead to counter-productive and counter-intuitive assessments of the situations at hand. Therefore, while formulating measures to counter radicalism, policy-makers and analysts must take into consideration the various motivations that fuel the radicalism engine among the youth, and try to address the causes of those motivations.

[6] "2001 Census Data - Distribution of Population by Religion." Census of India. January 1, 2001. Accessed March 29, 2015. http://censusindia.gov.in/Census_And_You/religion.aspx. [Note: The population is estimated to be higher, but as the official census website has yet to display the statistics, this author will use statistics from the 2001 census.]

[7] McCue, Colleen, and Kathryn Haahr. "The Impact of Global Youth Bulges on Islamist Radicalization and Violence." CTC Sentinel, October 1, 2008, 12.

II. Vulnerabilities, Motivations and Roles of Political and Socio-Economic Factors

The general approach towards the issue of radicalism and/or violent extremism with an objective to counter it appears to begin and revolve around counter-terrorism and "de-radicalisation". It is often ignored that while these two approaches are indeed important, the more pressing need is to stem this tendency altogether. Counter-terrorism, de-radicalisation and similar measures are all post-facto actions, and they do not address the original issue – the causes fuelling radicalisation itself – at all.

Contrary to popular belief, the causes of radicalisation do not always lie only in religion. Therefore, if religion alone is considered a motivational factor, post-facto measures towards combating radicalism might bring results, but the breeding grounds for radicalism will continue to remain fertile, and vulnerable members of society will as a result continue to fall prey to it.

Regardless of the differences in some details, the common minimums of motivations for radicalisation are the same everywhere.

Roles of Political and Socio-Economic Factors

That most security-related problems are brought about by individuals who are and have been part of local and regional societies is often forgotten.

Often grossly overlooked, socio-economic factors and political inclusiveness levels play a key role in the process of radicalisation. It would be incorrect to view socio-economic and socio-political factors as the sole motivation for the transformation from pre-radicalisation to violent extremism. However, these factors enter the fray due to their ability to make or prevent the environment from becoming conducive for radicalism. The simultaneous changes (or lack of it) in the nature and levels of political inclusion, social cohesion and social movement on the economic front collectively decide the levels of resentment in the population, especially among the minorities, and in multi-cultural societies that exist in South Asia.

Absence of effective platforms for these resentments and grievances to be expressed and addressed leads to a build-up of this attitude among individuals. When many individuals from the same community share such resentment, at some level, for some individuals, that resentment begins to become a motivational factor fuelling the need to 'take action'; and if non-violent action hasn't delivered any results, the alternative that is often sought is violent action. 'Innovative action' is seldom sought.

This hypothesis is not to say that every individual bearing any resentment becomes a violent extremist. Instead, this hypothesis attempts to convey that if a similar nature of resentment, especially ones related to religion, culture, socio-economic statuses and/or political inclusion, is felt by a multiplicity of individuals living in close proximity (physical or virtual) to each other for similar reasons, then the collective frustrations resulting from a sense of helplessness towards addressing the resentment becomes a

conducive breeding environment for at least one loose cannon to choose violent extremism over other options to address the factors causing this resentment.

Vulnerability of the Youth

Often, adolescents and post-adolescence youth seek inclusion, or the sense of belongingness to an idea, a way of life, or approaches to various issues and subjects. This mostly comes coupled with the energy and push to 'do something'. When all the aforementioned factors come together, the melting pot can result in a variety of experiences and outcomes. However, most individuals with resentment might at the most be aggrieved, but may not necessarily turn to violent extremism – as seen in the case of approximately 140 million Indian Muslims.

Inclusion and Exclusion

A prevalence or perceived sense of marginalisation and/or exclusion from political and economic processes, and the absence of debates and free and frank interaction between and/or within communities, especially in multicultural societies, leads to ghetto-isation, not only of communities but also of thought processes and ideas. For instance, if there is no discussion and/or interaction between any community that collectively feels resentment over certain issues and the community (or communities) that doesn't share similar sentiments, the absence of diversity in perspectives results in the festering and strengthening of the same sentiment felt by the former; and also results in lack of understanding between the parties. In such a set-up, whenever there is a clash, there are only two sides to choose from for the members of the communities – and due to the absence of alternative views, members often end up taking the side of their own community instead of addressing the issue with a rational, practical approach. This is especially typical of communal clashes and they manifest themselves all over the world; an example would be the anti-Muslim sentiment building up in various parts of the globe.

A South Asian example of this phenomenon could be India's own 2002 Gujarat Riots example. Miscreants and violent individuals exist in all societies and cultures; but moderate and non-violent individuals exist in higher numbers – and they must be actively engaged in combating radicalism.

South Asia's complex collective experiences often impact the way governments, societies and communities interact with each other. The line treaded is often delicate, and political priorities often take precedence over practicality.

Pakistan's sectarian conflict is a defining example of this phenomenon. Formed as a homeland state for Muslims but democratic in the nature of governance, following several coups and misevaluated policies, Pakistan became a state where Sunni Islam is considered paramount. Even minority communities belonging to the Islamic faith are attacked regularly. While these attacks are often carried out by Sunni Muslim terror-

ist groups, the government often places low emphasis on addressing this issue – thus providing implicit encouragement to such groups.

Poorly planned actions backfire colossally in this region. For instance, there exists a great deal of resentment and unrest even among Pakistan's dominant Sunni Muslim community along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border where drone strikes targeting terrorists have caused much resentment among the locals; and many youths have chosen violent means to achieve retribution.

Even members of left wing extremist groups and Islamist terrorist networks based and operating in India exhibit similar shades: that of resentment, disenchantment, and a sense of having been grossly disappointed by governance and other policies.

Thus, reasons for radicalisation, religious or otherwise, rest heavily on the absence of three key components in the administrations of states:

a.   Absence of good governance

b.   Absence of effective judicial systems

c.   Absence of platforms to be heard

III. Methods of Recruitment and the Role of Social Media

Today's terrorists are extremely tech savvy, making them doubly dangerous compared with their antecedents. The scale of al Qaeda's reach, and responses, during the pre-Internet and/or pre-social media days was tremendous. With that precedent, it is unsurprising that any terrorist group in the age of social media would find it easy to network and recruit in any part of the globe. To that end, the IS is engaged in a concerted information warfare in the age of communication.

The IS is unlike its predecessors in one key way. Its goals are rooted in a medieval structure of existence but it doesn't shy away from harnessing modern resources so long as that serves the organisation's primary goal: spreading the word and acquiring support (human, material and organisational). Some visible trends in the IS's social media strategies are:

a. Modes of dissemination of information

While there are various outlets for dissemination of information about and by the IS, at the core, there are two main outlets:

(1)   Official communication

(2)   Dissemination of information by members and/or sympathisers of the IS

This is important, because these are the two entities with direct links to the source of information.

Relaying of information placed in the public domain by the aforementioned entities is usually done by empathisers, supporters etc. – secondary source – i.e., those non-members who relay information (for instance, re-tweeting a tweet) who do not have direct links to the organisation.

When a secondary source relays information, those empathisers or vulnerable individuals from the secondary source's areas and cultures of geographical proximity perceive it as more legitimate and as a result, in some cases, feel encouraged to either believe and/or relay it further.

An example was the case of Mehdi Biswas, a 24-year-old man from Bengaluru, India[8]. His Twitter handle, "Shami Witness", relayed IS propaganda and information on a regular basis, and had "followers" from across the spectrum.[9]

b. Style of presentation

IS presents its communication in a dramatic fashion. The contents of the information are usually fashioned to evoke strong emotions by stoking the embers of deep-seated resentments of several kinds. The idea of an "Islamic" caliphate is extremely romanticised in the content. Furthermore, the IS has proven its capability to produce a wide variety of content and be incredibly adaptable to context and region while disseminating its propaganda. For instance, their propaganda material ranges from print publications (such as its official monthly magazine *Dabiq*), tweets, Facebook posts, posters and video messages, etc.

The IS also adapts the language of the propaganda content to suit the region and "target audience".[10] The IS essentially speaks the language of the people it wants to speak with, and uses relevant references to capture the attention of those accessing this information.[11]

c. Branding

Another prominent feature of IS propaganda is the visible emphasis on creating a strong "brand image". It issues statements and press releases like a functional state would; it communicates with the rest of the world on a regular basis via its magazines, videos and social media and comments on current events, among others. It also practises a

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[8] "Suo Motu Statement by the Home Minister Shri Rajnath Singh in Parliament on the Arrest of a Youth Running Twitter Handle on Behalf of ISIS." Press Information Bureau. December 15, 2014. Accessed December 16, 2014. http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=113332.

[9] Ibid.

[10] "Urdu, Hindi & Tamil Subtitled Video of Al-Ghuraba - The Chosen Few of Different Lands". Al Isabah Media Production, 2014. Film. Accessed March 30, 2015. https://archive.org/details/isabahGhuraba; "Join the Ranks". Al-Ḥayat Media Center, 2014. Film. Accessed March 30, 2015. http://jihadology.net/2014/07/22/al-%E1%B8%A5ayat-media-center-presents-a-new-video-message-from-the-islamic-state-join-the-ranks/.

[11] Ibid.

strategy of promoting "life in the Islamic state" wherein it produces videos and text material about general life in the regions it controls. In those videos, it demonstrates the nature and abilities of its justice systems[12] and administrative systems, and the 'transparency' and 'accountability' of the State in general. For instance, *Dabiq* carries interviews (of IS leaders as well as hostages), long-form commentaries and reports on various issues, and the presentation styles give an impression of the existence of strong research capabilities.

Furthermore, these communication modules do not just include statements and opinions from those partaking in the administration of the region it controls, but also those of the people who live under their rule.[13] While the genuineness of the statements made by the local population in support of the IS's rule of their lands is questionable, the positive reviews given by them on record help build a favourable image of the group for the vulnerable people who seek an alternative to their current state-of-affairs of existence.

In essence, the IS's propaganda material projects the image of the existence of an alternative to the existing systems of administration and life. The group's play on the 'inclusiveness' factor is heavy – especially with the existence of a wide variety of recruits from across the globe[14]. Among other examples, it is evident in its attempt to justify its military and political decisions in its literature.[15]

Islamic State, Technology, and South Asia

The IS's technological prowess has been established as competitive and up to date. This aspect of the group's strengths could prove problematic for South Asia because, ironically, although South Asia, especially India, is a huge exporter of information technology (IT) services, the governments' IT capabilities seem sub-par in comparison to those of corporate entities. A quick glance at the governments' official websites and the technology employed to protect the data on those websites will substantiate this argument. To that end, in the event of a strong cyber-attack carried out by the IS on digital systems and processes in South Asia, the results will be disastrous for the region.

[12] "Establishing the Ḥad of Theft – Wilāyat Diglah". Islamic State (had_alsareqa), 2015. Film. Accessed March 30. 2015. https://archive.org/details/had_alsareqa.

[13] "Touring An Administrative District in the Shadow of the Islamic State – Wilayat Ninawa". Islamic State. 2015. Film. Accessed March 30. http://nasher.me/video_3/.

[14] Barrett, Richard. Foreign Fighters in Syria. Soufan Group, 2014. Accessed January 14. http://soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/TSG-Foreign-Fighters-in-Syria.pdf

[15] "Islamic State Liberates the City of Mosul." Islamic State Report, June 1, 2014. Accessed March 24. https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2014/06/islamic-state-of-iraq-and-al-shc481m-e2809cislamic-state-report-3e280b3.pdf

Attractiveness of the IS Propaganda

This strategy is most attractive to those individuals whose existence is often threatened and/or marginalised, and who, as a result, seek a better life. This ties into the afore-mentioned phenomenon of the absence of three key elements – governance, justice, and platforms to be heard – and inclusiveness in their regions of existence. This is of utmost importance for South Asia, given the social complexities and the existence of serious gaps in governance, judicial and policy-making structures. And for the several young already-recruited terrorists who are evidently frustrated by the lack of clarity in the agendas of al Qaeda and the Taliban, the IS is an option that offers structure and sets goals and targets.

To that end, those youth yet to indulge in violent extremism seeking to join the IS to try out an alternative life coordinate with sympathisers like Mehdi Biswas to network while they plan their travel to Syria and Iraq. Interestingly, there have been cases where there have been returnees who have cited bad conditions and the "un-Islamic-ness" of the "caliphate" for their return.[16]

IV. State Responses to Radicalism and Terrorism

In January 2015, the IS launched its South Asia wing and named it "Wilayat Khurasan". Those designated to be in the "governing council" of this entity were militants formerly associated with the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan and other related groups – setting off a whole different set of problems.

Although South Asian nations agree on the need for mutual cooperation to counter terrorism, action on that front is mostly absent. There are several bilateral and multi-lateral understandings, mechanisms, and processes to curb movement of terrorists and terrorist finances and materials[17] but a concerted regional strategy to counter terrorism is jarringly absent. Each country follows its own policy towards addressing the issue, and also cooperates with other countries in the region, but on an individual basis. The need of the hour is a formulation and implementation of regional counter-terrorism strategies, intelligence-sharing mechanisms, and policies to optimise the individual countries' counter-terrorism efforts.

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[16]   Tomlinson, Simon. "'ISIS Made Me Clean the Toilets... and My IPod Didn't Work': How Disenchanted Islamic Fanatics Are Returning Home Because Jihad Isn't as Glamorous as They Hoped". *Daily Mail*, December 1, 2014. Accessed December 14, 2014. http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2855780/Indian-IS-recruit-goes-home-having-clean-toilets.html.

[17]   "SAARC Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism and Its Additional Protocol." South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation. Accessed March 19, 2015. http://saarc-sec.org/areaofcooperation/detail.php?activity_id=21.

However, unless there is any movement towards better understanding between India and Pakistan, it appears that even the seriousness of the IS threat will not aid in the formulation of a uniform regional counter-strategy to supplement domestic strategies.

At the time of writing this paper, India is the only South Asian country that has officially designated the IS as a terrorist group[18]. This move came soon after the identification of a pro-IS Twitter handle owner as an Indian citizen from southern India. However, India has also to tread a delicate line in order to ensure the security of the millions of Indian citizens employed in the West Asian neighbourhood.

Additionally, although the other South Asian countries have not designated the IS as a terrorist group, their governments are undertaking efforts to fight the threat via various means.

Pakistan, following the December 2014 carnage at the army school in Peshawar, has intensified its efforts to counter terrorism and radicalism, militarily and policy-wise. They have done so by intensifying the army's ongoing Operation Zarb-e-Azb, (so far, partially) implementing a National Action Plan and working towards bringing the thousands of religious seminaries under state watch. However, those militants who were flushed out of Pakistan due to the aforementioned operation are among many, along with some disgruntled former Afghan Taliban members, who have pledged allegiances to the IS.

Afghanistan is undertaking steady steps to address the issue. The governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan have agreed to cooperate on counter-terrorism efforts – a healthy development, given the nature of the bilateral relationship between the two countries[19]. Additionally, the Afghan Taliban too is at loggerheads with the IS. Interestingly, both, the Afghan government and the Afghan Taliban, are on the same side in their battle against the IS[20].

Bangladesh has already banned radical Islamist groups, a move that has set off problems of political instability and uncertainty across the country. The incumbent government, however, appears to be committed to countering radicalism and curbing and combating violent extremism.[21]

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[18] "List of Banned Organisations under Section 35 of Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (As on 27-01-2014)." Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India. January 1, 2014. Accessed March 25, 2015. http://mha.nic.in/BO.

[19] "Pakistan-Afghanistan Cooperation against Terrorism." Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Pakistan. February 12, 2015. Accessed February 12, 2015. http://www.mofa.gov.pk/pr-details.php?prID=2565.

[20] "Taliban Capture IS Leader Mullah Rauf, 45 Supporters." *Pajhwok Afghan News*, January 28, 2015. Accessed January 28, 2015. http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2015/03/10/taliban-capture-leader-mullah-rauf-45-supporters.

[21] "7th Asia-Pacific Intelligence Chiefs Conference, Address By HE Sheikh Hasina Hon'ble Prime Minister, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh." 2014. Accessed March 2, 2015. http://pmo.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/pmo.portal.gov.bd/pm_speech/19d7e164_8181_42a9_af21_408deec92517/7th_asiapacific_intelligence_conf_eng_020914.pdf.

Nepal has agreed to counter the IS threat in collaboration with the UN, as opposed to joining a US-led coalition.[22]

The Maldives, which, proportionately, is a source of high numbers of foreign fighters to the IS,[23] has stated that a Strategic Action Plan is being implemented to combat religious extremism.[24] This plan is stated to be extended to ensure prevention of growth of radical views in educational institutions. However, this information was revealed after much questioning and pressure, and as a result, has raised questions over the sincerity of the government towards addressing this issue.

Sri Lanka's counter-strategies to combat radicalisation and recruitment into terrorist groups are yet to be seen, especially due to the change in leadership that took place in January 2015. The leadership appears to be focused more on other domestic issues such as combating corruption, economic development and bringing stability to the Northern Province.

While Bhutan is not at a high risk from the IS, the landlocked country has expressed its commitment towards regional and global initiatives to combat terrorism. According to the UN, Bhutan has ratified "8 of the 19 international legal instruments against terrorism."[25] The country has also expressed its emphasis on countering cyber-crime.[26]

V. Countering Radicalism: Lessons from the Indian Experience

Countering Radicalism without Violating Fundamental Human Rights

The core causes of radicalism lie in sociological and political circumstances and therefore, initiatives towards combating radicalism at its roots will have to target the very factors that create conducive environments for radical ideas to breed. Any counter-

[22] Sharma, Christopher. "Nepal Declares Support for United Nations in the Fight against ISIS." *Asia News*, December 9, 2014. Accessed February 19, 2015. http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Nepal-declares-support-for-United-Nations-in-the-fight-against-ISIS-32131.html.

[23] Burke, Jason. "Paradise Jihadis: Maldives Sees Surge in Young Muslims Leaving for Syria." *The Guardian*, February 26, 2015. Accessed February 27, 2015. http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/26/paradise-jihadis-maldives-islamic-extremism-syria.

[24] Rasheed, Zaheena. "Six Maldivians Reported as Latest to Travel for Jihad, Taking One-year-old Infant". *Minivan News*, January 6, 2015. Accessed January 5, 2015. http://minivannews.com/politics/six-maldivians-reported-as-latest-to-travel-for-jihad-taking-one-year-old-infant-91988#sthash.dLw7CjqY.wwjr2a48.dpbs.

[25] "Bhutan: Countering Use of the Internet for Terrorist Activities - an Emerging Concern." United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (South Asia). Accessed March 17, 2015. http://www.unodc.org/southasia/en/frontpage/2015/Jan/bhutan-countering-use-of-the-internet-for-terrorist-activities-an-emerging-concern.html.

[26] "Bhutan: Countering Use of the Internet for Terrorist Activities - an Emerging Concern." United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (South Asia). Accessed March 17, 2015. http://www.unodc.org/southasia/en/frontpage/2015/Jan/bhutan-countering-use-of-the-internet-for-terrorist-activities-an-emerging-concern.html.

radicalism strategy will therefore be incomplete without a substantial element of social initiatives. Here, inclusiveness is key.

To that end, counter-radicalism efforts will have to uphold every individual's fundamental human rights as paramount. Simultaneously, India's experience with administering a state with a large population extremely diverse in terms of religion, culture, ethnicity and ideology could be built upon.

The "Curious" Case of Moderation among Indian Muslims

At a time when Muslim youth from Western countries are joining the IS in large and disproportionate numbers, India, with a Muslim population of 140 million, has, proportionately, been the source of very few foreign fighters. While this is viewed as an anomaly and has made several analysts curious as to how and why the pull of violent extremism is so low in a country with such a high number of Muslims, Indians are not surprised. This is essentially because Indian Muslims have maintained a stellar record vis-à-vis these issues. For the most part, many non-Muslim Indians do not even know the difference between Shias and Sunnis, let alone the sub-sects. This is because peaceful coexistence and moderation has always been a characteristic of all sects of Muslims in India. India barely witnesses sectarian violence among Muslims in the country. However, although there have been several instances of organised jihadist terror activities in the country, they have been scattered and have not escalated beyond state control.

The moderation among the Indian Muslims despite existence of resentment among many is due to the presence of inclusiveness and accommodativeness of different cultures, religions and traditions in the Indian constitution. One may cite the democratic values of Western countries, but those values do not come without policy biases of their own. For instance, France's ban on the *hijab* was as undemocratic as forcing a person to wear a *hijab*. The right to decide on whether or not to wear a *hijab* is the individual's own and not for the government to impose. The ban essentially took away the individual's right to choice of lifestyle – which is undemocratic.

Conversely, the Indian constitution does not tamper with religious preferences of individuals and communities. India's constitution provides ample scope and institutionalised processes for jurisprudence both according to religious preferences of all individuals, as well as for processes not based in religion. For instance, the Indian constitution provides for marriage-related laws as per each religion, as well as the Special Marriage Act[27]. Additionally, there is a substantial level of political representation and electoral clout the Muslim community exercises in all spheres of the administration and workings of the country. Additionally, although the benefits may trickle down to

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[27] "Constitution of India." India.gov.in. Accessed March 25, 2015. http://india.gov.in/my-government/constitution-india/constitution-india-full-text.

all, government schemes do exist to assist all marginalised groups, including Muslim groups.[28]

More importantly, Indian Muslims are not concentrated in one geographic area of the country. The Indian Muslim community is spread across the country; and in a multi-cultural setting such as India's, people of all religious and cultural backgrounds are habituated to co-existence – especially when dealing with diverse people on a daily basis. Furthermore, irrespective of the existence of political bias, the constitution is extremely secular and accommodating, thereby providing scope for every community to enjoy its space without upsetting public order.

This level of inclusiveness is what is required to bring every beleaguered group, irrespective of their background, into the debate, and extend ownership and duty to one's nation and the global community at large.

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[28] "Schemes/Performance." Ministry of Minority Affairs, Government of India. Accessed March 15, 2015. http://www.minorityaffairs.gov.in/#; Irani, Smriti. "Schemes for Madarsa Modernisation." Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India. December 3, 2014. Accessed January 10, 2015. http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/lu1717.pdf.

Radicalization: Impact on Muslim Minority Communities in Southern Philippines

Mussolini Sinsuat Lidasan

Introduction

With a history that long predates the September 11 bombing in New York and the US declaration of war on terrorism, the Muslim-Christian conflict in Mindanao has a context that was brought about by the colonial powers of Spain, the US, and the Manila government.

Studies have shown that the conflict between Christians and Muslims has been a fact of life in the Philippines for centuries.[1] Hostility between these two religious groups has destabilized the country at times and has contributed to economic, political, and legal inequalities.

The problem of terrorism is not new in the Philippine setting. In Mindanao, the Moro rebellion for self-determination brought fear and insecurities to the communities. Take the case of an airline hijacking that happened on May 23, 1976. Based on reports, six hijackers took control of a commercial airliner and, after demands were not met, detonated grenades that exploded the plane on a runway in the Philippines.[2]

This hijacking incident was one of the Philippines' earliest terror attacks that caused international reverberations.[3]

With the uprising of the Moro revolutionary movements, network and links with international terrorists soon after infiltrated the Philippines and established operational lines and allies on the ground.[4]

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[1] Lyew, Brent H., 2010 Pacific Rim Law & Policy Journal Association. An Examination of the Philippines' Anti-Terror Law-Suaviter in Moro, Fortiter. Washington Law International Journal. University of Washington.

[2] Aviation Safety Network, Hijacking Description: 23 May 1976, http://aviation- safety.net/database/record.php?id=19760523-1 (last visited October 8, 2009).

[3] Romulo C. Supapo, U.S.-Philippine Security Relations: Its Implications For The Global War On Terrorism 2 (2004), http://www.dtic.mil/cgi- bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA424307&Location=U2&doc=GetTRDoc.pdf (last visited Oct. 8, 2009).

[4] See Esaquito P. Manalo, "The Philippine Response to Terrorism: The Abu Sayyaf Group", Naval Post Graduate School 1 (December 2004) (unpublished master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School), http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA429991&Location=U2&doc=GetTRDoc.pdf.

Still unknown to many Filipinos, attacks escalated[5]. In 1991, terrorists attempted to bomb the United States' ("US") embassy in Manila,[6] and since 2000, terrorist acts in the Philippines have killed or injured more than 1,700 people[7].

In 1999-2003, the attacks included bombings of airports, seaports, and bus terminals.[8]

The Philippine government responded to the growing terrorist problem with military force.

Different studies have shown that one of the root causes of Mindanao's underdevelopment is the decades-old conflict in South Central Mindanao and Western Mindanao, including the island provinces of Basilan, Sulu, and Tawi Tawii.

Before the PNoy administration took over in 2010, the following are the data showing the status of Mindanao as a whole. According to the Mindanao 2020 Peace and Development Framework Plan, "[p]overty and deprivation remain the single most important human challenge in Mindanao. Most of its provinces have a human development index (HDI) below the national figure, with ARMM (Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao provinces, especially Tawi-Tawi and Sulu, having the lowest". The study has also shown that about half of Mindanawons lived below the poverty line, beyond the national average of 33%.

It also mentioned that, in 2009, six of the country's ten poorest provinces were in Mindanao, with Zamboanga del Norte at the bottom, with 52.9% poor families.

What is also alarming is that life expectancy is shorter there, at an average of 65 years against the national average of 70 years in 2006. Five of the ten provinces with the lowest life expectancies nationwide are in the ARMM, with Sulu registering the lowest at 55.5 years.

In terms of education, the Net Participation Rate (NPR) in the elementary level stood at 78.5% in 2006-2007, well below the national NPR of 83.2%. Mindanao accounted for six out of ten provinces with the lowest high school completion ratio in 2006, with Sulu again at the bottom with a ratio of 23.1%.

Another study, Mindanao Strategic Development Framework 2010-2020, conducted by the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), states that Mindanao's provinces are among the poorest in the country. The poverty incidence increased to 45.5% in 2006, higher than the national average of 32.9%. The 2006

[5]   Id. 4.

[6]   Romulo C. Supapo, "US-Philippine Security Relations: Its Implications for the Global War on Terrorism" (2004): Paper, Master of Strategic Studies Degree. U.S. Army War College Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

[7]   "Philippines: Extremist Groups Target Civilians, More Than 1,700 Killed and Injured in Bombings and Kidnappings", Human Rights Watch, July 29, 2007, http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2007/07/29/philippines-extremist-groups-target-civilians (last visited Oct. 8, 2009).

[8]   Carlos H. Conde, "400 Killed by Terrorism in Philippines since 2000, Report Says", *N.Y. Times*, July 30, 2007, available at http://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/30/world/asia/30iht-phils.4.6902202.html.

Human Development Index (HDI) shows that seven of the ten poorest provinces are in Mindanao and five of the poorest seven provinces are in ARMM, namely Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, Maguindanao, Basilan and Lanao del Sur. The provinces of Sarangani (SOCCSKSARGEN) and Zamboanga del Norte (Zamboanga Peninsula) complete the list of Mindanao provinces at the bottom ten of the HDI ranking. The conflict in Mindanao has become a smokescreen obscuring the real situation on the ground. It also breeds a new generation of radicalized youths that feels justified to use armed violence to address their grievances.

This article aims to analyze the effects of the conflict in Mindanao on the Filipino Muslim youth living in the ARMM. It starts by providing the historical background of the Bangsamoro's quest for the right of self-determination and observes the current government's response in the peace process that hopes to sign the Bangsamoro Basic Law as the final peace agreement with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). It also examines the effects of the recent Mamasapano Tragedy that derailed the ongoing peace process and brought out in the open the prejudices and biases of the Christian Filipino majority.

Historical Perspective

Islam was introduced into the Philippines as early as the 10th century AD. How Islam came to Mindanao is a complex question that cannot be answered by existing information. However, it is a known historical fact that after the death of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in 632 AD, Islam spread widely in Eastern Europe, Middle East, North Africa, Spain, and Central Asia.

In his book Howard M. Federspiel (2007)[9] states:

> Islam is recognized as the religion that has been practiced by large numbers of people since the seventh century A.D. It was established by a religious and political figure named Muhammad, who lived, preached, and undertook to deliver a message he understood as a command from God to create a community of believers. That religion went on to become an identifying characteristic for a civilization that extended from the Iberian Peninsula in the west to the borders of India in the ninth and tenth centuries; and its creed, tenets, ceremonies, beliefs, and practices were given an orthodox framework by numerous scholars, rulers, and religious activists. By the fifteenth century it had split into two sizeable communities, the Sunnis and the Shi'ahs. It had also established jurisprudential schools and a number of mystical orders that crisscrossed the various regions where the followers of Islam lived and worked. Islam throughout its history has been a religion, a way of life, and a definer

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9 Federspiel, Howard M. 2007. *Sultans, Shamans & Saints: Islam and Muslims in Southeast Asia*. University of Hawaii Press.

of culture and civilization. A Muslim is an adherent of Islam who identifies with
the religion and lives in general accordance with the values and tenets both of the
religion and of the civilization that has emerged to represent Islam.

In this quotation, Federspiel describes not only the spread of the Islamic faith via the historical maritime trade routes in Southeast Asia, but also its adoption by different civilizations it encountered, such as those in Mindanao. Since its transmission, Islam has evolved to influence the political life, social customs, culture and arts wherever it gained reception.

In contemporary Southeast Asia, Islam has more than two hundred million followers. This makes it the largest religious tradition in the region. In Southeast Asia the Sunni sect dominates in Muslim-majority states such as Malaysia, Indonesia, and Brunei, and also in the southern regions of Thailand and the Philippines.

Islam in Mindanao

The *Cambridge History of Islam* (Volume 2A) describes how Islam spread in the island of Mindanao. It states, "North-west Borneo, the Sulu Islands and the southern Philippines are all situated along a trade-route which connected Malacca with the Philippines. It is therefore mostly Arabs, calling in at Malacca or Johore on their merchant travels, who are reputed to have been the bearers of Islam to these three regions." Islam first reached the island of Sulu. The history of Sulu narrates that the first Arab missionary who brought Islam to Sulu was Sharif Karim al-Makhdum.

In mainland Mindanao, the most instrumental Muslim in the propagation of Islam was an Arab missionary named Shariff Muhammad Kabungsuan. In the year 1475, Kabungsuan landed at the coastal town of Malabang, along Illana Bay. From there he proceeded to Katuli near Cotabato.

Islam as introduced by Shariff Kabungsuan rapidly became a "way of life" in Central Mindanao. He originated from Johore, son of an Arab father, claiming descent from Muhammad, and a Malay mother.

From that time on, Islam "as a way of life" spread eventually. Aside from the Islam faith, "Shariff Kabungsuan introduced the sultanate system of government. It became the starting point for the claims of the rulers of Cotabato in the historical period to nobility and moral authority. The traditional system of hereditary ranked statuses is also traced to the arrival of Kabungsuwan."[10]

Soon after the Islamization of some parts of Mindanao, the other islands of the Philippines were occupied and colonized by the Spanish colonial government. In Luzon and Visayas, they were colonized by Spain for over 300 years – a different historical

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[10] Mckenna, Thomas M., *Muslim Rulers and Rebels Everyday Politics and Armed Separatism in the Southern Philippines*, University of California Press, Berkeley (Los Angeles and Oxford), 1998.

narrative of identity that led to the birth of Filipino national unity after 350 years of peasant revolts, culminating in the revolution of 1896-98[11].

In 1596, the King of Spain reached an agreement with Captain Esteban Rodriguez de Figueroa to colonize Mindanao. In this agreement, the conquest of Mindanao was seen as crucial to the subjugation of Borneo, Sulu, Java and the Moluccas. Unfortunately, due to the strong unity of the sultanates in Mindanao, Figueroa's military expedition was a failure.

This then started the 350-year Moro wars against the Spanish colonial administration.

Bangsamoro's Quest for the Right to Self Determination

Epifanio San Juan, Jr., a literary academic, activist, and writer, writes, "[I]n reviewing the struggle of the Moro (the preferred term for 'Muslims' in the Philippines) people for justice and autonomy, I subscribe to the imperative of historical specification. In my view, the politics of identity, multiculturalism, 'otherness,' and 'difference' cannot be fully comprehended 'in abstraction from material circumstances and of political project…All propositions for social action (or conceptions of social justice) must be critically evaluated in terms of the situatedness or positionality of the argument and the arguer'. Cultural ethnic traits find their efficacious valence only within the totality of social relations of a historical region and epoch". This resonates to the historical fact that the Muslims have always asserted that they never surrendered (although the famed Kudarat himself was driven by Spanish forces to the Ilihan heights to hide indefinitely and the Tausugs as well as the Joloanos lost to the Spanish generals Atienza, Corcuera, and Almonte)[12].

Dr. Heidi Gloria said in her book, "[T]here may have been no clear winners in the Moro Wars, but what is certain is that it claimed hundreds and thousands of victims. Hundreds and thousands of innocent lives were lost not only in Mindanao, Sulu, Jolo but all over the archipelago. It left the Philippine south permanently scarred".

The Bangsamoro's struggle for self-determination had led to the conflict in Mindanao for several decades. From the Spanish colonial government, a different "enemy" emerged in the early 1900s.

An article[13] in the Internet said that "the Philippines (including the territories inhabited by the Moros) was annexed by violence and diplomacy at the threshold of the

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[11] Pomeroy, William. *The Philippines: Colonial, Collaboration, and Resistance!*. International Publishers. NY. 1992.

[12] See Gloria, Dr. Heidi, *History From Below*, Ateneo de Davao Press, 2013.

[13] "The Moro Struggle For Self-Determination In The Philippines", https://philcsc.wordpress.com/2008/08/09/the-moro-struggle-for-self-determination-in-the-philippines/.

twentieth century." Way back when a five-member Peace Commission was appointed by President William McKinley to sign the Treaty of Paris ending the Spanish-American War and Spain's cession of the Philippine Islands to the US for $20 million, Whitelaw Reid, publisher of the *New York Tribune* and Commission member, wrote in his journal: "[The Philippines] embraced a great variety of races, pure and mixed, including many still in a stage of savagery….A large section of the South [Mindanao and Sulu] was under the control of the Mohammedans, who had never been conquered by Spain, and who were believed to be depraved, intractable and piratical"[14].

In the words of the late Sultan HRH Datu Amir Andong Baraguir, al Hajj, the 25th Sultan of Maguindanao:

> History shows that as a nation our people, the Maguindanaons have continuously enjoyed their independence prior to the illegal occupation by America which was merely based on the illegitimate inclusion of Maguindanao in the sale of the Philippine Islands to the USA by Spain. We were not duly consulted when Spain illegally sold us. We were not rightly consulted when the US occupied us. We were not adequately consulted when the Philippines inherited us from the illegal occupant – the USA.

Based on the different peace accords, it seems that a precedent was set up to *exclude* people from their own governance. The Philippine government tends to talk with people with arms and at some point, "rewarded" the dissidents who "surrendered" with economic packages one after the other.

OUTSIDERS' VIEW OF RESISTANCE AS AN ACT OF TERROR

After two decades of the signing of the Treaty of Paris, US military officials described the strange customs of the Moros, highlighting the familiar signs of truth-bearing discourse: "When a Moro became tired of life he could go juramentado. Such a Moro would shave his eyebrows, get blessed by a priest, don a white garment, and rush in to kill as many Christians as he could before meeting his death….The juramentado will steal up toward his intended victims, keeping as much as possible unobserved, until a chance arrived to rush in and start slashing with a cold steel. One Moro was seen to seize the rifle of his opponent and pull the bayonet through himself so as to get near enough to reach his adversary with his kris before dying"[15].

This phenomenon led to the phrase "the Moro Problem". As early as 1913, the US government tried to address the Moro Problem. Dr. Najeeb N. Saleeby from the US Army wrote in 1913: "By the Moro problem is meant that method or form of

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14   Ocampo, Ambeth. 1998. *The Centennial Countdown*. Quezon City: Anvil Publishing.

15   Ewing, J. Franklin. 1955. "Juramentado: Institutionalized Suicide among the Moros of the Philippines". Vol. 28, No. 4, New Series Vol. 3 (Oct., 1955). The George Washington University Institute for Ethnographic Research.

administration by which the Moros and other non-Christians who are living among them, can be governed to their best interest and welfare in the most peaceful possible way". He further said, "We have not gone to Moro-land to exploit the resources of the country nor to rule it for our benefit. Its government is a sacred trust and the principle of 'the Philippines for the Filipinos' was meant to apply to Mindanao and Sulu in the same sense at that in which it was applied to the Bisayans and Luzon….Moroland is destined to ultimately form one or more provinces which will be integral parts of the general provincial organization of the Philippine Islands, and it is the duty of its present government to also develop its citizens and institutions as to bring such transformation and incorporation in due time." So while he is saying that Mindanao or "Moroland" is a "problem," he also says that it should be ruled first for its best interests.

Dr. Saleeby had this description of the way it was: "A wide and deep chasm separates the Moros from their Christian neighbours. Marked inequality in culture and radical differences of civilization make it impossible to govern them alike. Two forms of government are at present necessary, one for the Moro and one for the Christian. The Moro has to develop reform and rise to the level of the Christian before the two governments can be united or incorporated."

He then offers two ways to solve "the problem": "We have to either be tolerant and accept present conditions and institutions as they are and gradually reform them, or be intolerant and introduce radical changes from the start. The first course begins with amity but with permanent progress with telling effect. The second course is bound to begin with amity and proceed with opposition every step of the way."

Unfortunately, Dr. Saleeby's recommendation to take the first path was not followed. In 1955, the Congress – House of Special Committee investigated the "Moro Problem." They said: "'The Moro Problem,' as it is known and so called by the government and the nation at large, is nothing but the problem of integrating into the body politic the Muslim population of the country and inculcating into their minds that they are Filipinos and that this government is their own and they are a part of it."

The statement reflects the colonial and post-colonial government response to the Moro problem. Although the colonial period is over, there is very much still a colonial view. From 1955, let's fast forward the events. In the late 1960s, Muslim students and intellectuals began the Muslim separatist movement. It was a global effect from the start of the Cold War. Then, after violence in the 1970s in Cotabato, the Moro movement gained popular support and became an armed movement in response to 1972's Martial Law. Despite popular support and cohesion falling and rising in the rest of the 1970s, in the 1980s, the movement became more organized, more based on religion and run by Islamic religious leaders. Moro rebellion gained more support locally and internationally.

Furthermore, in 1995, Fortunato Abat, a retired general and chairman of the Ramos administration's Peace Panel, said, "The conflict in the South is not merely a Muslim

problem but is in fact a Christian problem – a legacy of the Spanish era….Even Jose Rizal, the national hero, regarded the Muslims as part of the Filipino nation, and in the statutes of La Liga Filipina, drafted in 1892, he proposed to unite the archipelago into one 'compact, vigorous and homogenous body.' Emilio Aguinaldo, the first president of the short-lived republic, sought the establishment of a special political system for non-Christian communities in conformity with traditional customs. However, the Christian delegates to the Malolos Congress, who were influenced by the Spaniards, were unable to appreciate Aguinaldo's call for unity. Spain's crusading spirit inculcated fear and hatred of Muslims".

There are approximately 5-8 million Muslim Filipinos living in our country today. Did our government really ask themselves: are they not radicalizing our Moro people by the way they handle the peace process? How do they actually view the Moros as a people?

Government's Response: Bangsamoro Basic Law

The Bangsamoro Basic Law and the present peace process between the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) is a political project for state building. The word *state* here refers to the Philippine republic. It also aims to address the historical injustice that is attached to these two identities.

Cardinal Orlando B. Quevedo, in a paper he delivered during the 27th General Assembly of the Bishops' Businessmen's Conference in Taguig, Metro Manila on July 8, 2003, said that injustice is the "root of the conflict in Mindanao." He classified this injustice into three points: injustice to the Moro identity; injustice to Moro political sovereignty; and injustice to Moro integral development.

Connecting the past and our present context, connecting Cardinal Quevedo's views and the call for strong Filipino nationalism, we need to learn from the past, and address the issues of social and historical injustices through our support for the Bangsamoro peace process.

The issue of social injustice resulted in the violent struggle for secession in the Philippines. It also provided fertile ground for the embedment of international terrorists. At the turn of the twentieth century, the US took control of the Philippines and occupied it under the Treaty of Paris.[16]

Lawlessness in Mindanao was mainly due to the ineffectiveness of government laws. The natural human reaction was mainly focused on self-preservation. The existence of armed bands and private armies in the late sixties through the seventies reflected the confusion and chaotic conditions prevailing at the time. Most of the

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[16] Ricardo A. David Jr., "The Causes and Prospect of the Southern Philippines Secessionist Movement", December 2003 (unpublished master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School), http://www.nps.edu/academics/sigs/nsa/publicationsandresearch/studenttheses/theses/David03.pdf (last visited October 8, 2009).

Muslim terror groups, especially the Barracudas and the Blackshirts, were organized to counter the Christian terror group known as the Ilaga, said to have been founded by seven Christian mayors of Cotabato. The creation of the Mindanao Independence Movement (MIM) was an idea that germinated well, fed by the inability of the government to contain the conflict with justice and impartiality.The war in Mindanao reached international levels due to the work of Nur Misuari, who framed the persecution of the Muslims as genocide perpetrated by the Philippine government.

The support of the Arab countries in Mindanao became the subject of negotiations between the Philippines and the Muslim countries, notably Libya and other Middle East states in the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC). (See Table 1 for the timeline of Filipino Muslims/Bangsamoro radicalization.) Through a series of meetings and official visits by the OIC to Mindanao to probe the allegations of genocide, the findings dispelled the existence of genocide of the Muslims; however, the international intervention resulted in the Tripoli Agreement, which provided for the creation of the Muslim Autonomous Region (MAR) in 1977.

The failure of the plebiscite to affirm the MAR during the Marcos administration was followed by the Jeddah Accord in 1987, signed between the Filipino government under Corazon Aquino and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). President Aquino ensured the creation of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao by including a chapter within the 1987 Constitution. Two years later, R.A. No. 6734, known as the Organic Act of the ARMM, was signed into law and in 1990, the first election for the ARMM were conducted in the provinces of Magindanao, Lanao del Sur, Tawi-Tawi and Sulu.

In 1996, the MNLF and the Philippine government signed the final peace agreement, which paved the way for the creation of the Special Zone of Peace and Development (SPCPD) and the Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development (SPCPD) under the administration of President Fidel Ramos. Pursuing the commitment to peace and development, President Gloria Arroyo expanded the area of autonomy with the addition of Basilan and Marawi City, while the recent administration of President Benigno Aquino III led the signing of the Comprehensive Agreement of the Bangsamoro between the government and the MILF.

Table 1

Timeline of Filipino Muslims/Bangsamoro Radicalization
❖ 1960s: Salamat Hashim studied in Al Ghazar University of Cairo, Egypt. He was introduced to political Islam.*
❖ 1970s: Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) was organized to fight the Marcos dictatorship.**
❖ 1978: Salamat split from MNLF and organized the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.
❖ 1980: MILF sends Moro youth to Pakistan and Afghanistan to join the first Muslim jihad in those countries.**
❖ 1981: Camp Abubakar Sadiq was established as the training ground for the MILF and their main camp.**
❖ 1988: Al Qaeda's Osama bin Laden sends his brother-in-law, Mohammad Jamal Khalifa, to the Philippines to begin setting up the network for their plans in Southeast Asia.**
❖ 1991: A splinter group, Abu Sayaf, was organized in the island provinces of Zamboanga. Khalifa made contacts with former MNLF combatant Abduradjak Janjalani and brought him to Pakistan to meet bin Laden.**
❖ 1993-2000: Hundreds of foreigners were trained in Camp Abubakar; strong ties of MILF and ASG with Al Qaeda were established through kinship relations.**
❖ 2000: All-Out War policy of President Estrada destroyed Camp Abubakar.*
* Al Qalam Institute, Bangsamoro Antecedents.
** Maria Ressa, *Seeds of Terror: An Eyewitness Account of Al-Qaeda Newest Center of Operations in Southeast Asia*. The Free Press, 2003.

Causes of Radicalization

Several studies have been conducted in to seek an understanding of the process of radicalization of the Filipino Muslims/Bangsamoro people. Scholars, peace advocates, and political leaders view the process using a historical and political perspective. But very few anthropological lenses have been applied to seek an understanding of the nature of the radicalization of the Moro people.

In his highly influential *Muslim Rulers and Rebels*, Thomas McKenna writes about two paradoxes. First, "there is a prevailing belief that the Muslim nationalist identity formed over the three hundred years of Spanish colonial rule and then refined against

the Americans." Cesar Majul, an historian, called it the Stages of Moro wars. Thomas McKenna, an anthropologist, interprets that evidence differently, saying that the Muslim separatist identity, known to be Islamic and anti-colonial, only began during the American period and was encouraged by the Americans. This was the period from the 1898 (Treaty of Paris) to 1913, when the Americans came in and started to establish the so-called Moro province.

The second paradox was that, although popular theories of nationalism claim that ordinary people involved in nationalist movements are motivated against ideas of nationalism from the elite, McKenna found that the central symbol for the Muslim separatist movement, the idea of a Philippine Muslim nation (Bangsamoro), did not really resonate with the rank-and-file, ordinary people. In fact, some of the ordinary people did not even see themselves as "Moro" or fighting for a new nation. Thus, the different series of process of integration had already addressed the issue of nationhood among the Muslim people in Mindanao.

Hence, the entire Muslim population in the country is not a monolithic group, nor is the so-called Bangsamoro people "one organization", as referred to by the Moro advocates.

If we want to understand the problem of radicalization, we must first examine the struggle for Muslim separatism in the Philippines (or any separatist struggle) through wide-ranging and multi-layered analyses of domination, accommodation and resistance. In short, we need a holistic view of looking at the situation in Mindanao. Second, we have to see the different paradoxes of Muslim separatism through power relations between the external state and local domain, but they must be linked together.

It is not enough to switch between external domination versus indigenous response and then indigenous rule versus local resistance. Everything must be taken into consideration and people's perspectives must come into play for good governance. So, to start making good decisions for good governance based on accurate information, we must know: what is really going on in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao? What factors must be considered?

First, as a previously colonized nation, we have an "anarchy of families." Another anthropologist, Keifer, observed that "for every compliant Datu, there has been a defiant one." Thus, we can hear the names of Datu Piang, Datu Salipada K. Pendatun, Datu Udtog Matalam, Datu Sinsuat Balabaran, Abdullah Dimaporo, and lately Zacaria Candao, Nur Misuari, and the Ampatuans. Though the power has been maintained and broken by different factions, having an accurate picture of where the powers are concentrated now is important so that we can arrive at a good solution for peace.

Second, there are larger and constantly shifting national-level players and their power dynamics to consider. While there are many to consider, some are the traditional politician warlords and their clans, key Bangsamoro dissident players like the

MILF/MNLF, ground commanders, select civil society organizations and NGOs, and religious teacher-ideologues. Different groups will have different interpretations of the issues and concerns; thus we must listen to how they see the issues and concerns so that we can find common ground.

We must ask ourselves: what role do these players play in the whole peace process? Are they supporters, stakeholders, spoilers, guardians, or gatekeepers?

Third, we know that there is massive graft and corruption in the ARMM. According to President Aquino III, who said during the postponement of the election in the region, "we have ghost teachers, with ghost students, in ghost classrooms in the provinces of ARMM". Lately, we still need to see the COA reports of the PAMANA Projects and Stimulus Fund. Aside from the government-funded projects, we need to monitor and evaluate the Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) funds.

Fourth, after the gruesome November 23 Massacre, we know how warlordism works on the ground. A culture of impunity is worsened by the massive amount of loose firearms in the hands of criminals and lawless elements. How do we handle these problems of "rido", violence and culture of impunity?

Lastly, in light of recent events, particularly the deaths of forty-four Special Action Force (SAF) policemen who participated in Operations Wolverine in Mamasapano, Maguindanao, we have to ask what each of us is willing to give up for peace, because peace is not free; it has a price. The deaths of these forty-four policemen and those of the MILF and non-combatants indicate how high the price could go. The hard question we raise is: what of the broken trust that each side must now rebuild piece by piece and bit by bit?

Conclusion

The Philippine government is at war with its own people, the Bangsamoro. The government must learn from the past mistakes of previous administrations. There is a current belief that peace will come to Mindanao if the Bangsamoro Basic Law now pending in the Congress of the Philippines is approved. For several decades, violent conflict in Mindanao encouraged the emergence of a war economy dominated by politicians, commanders and fighters, whose interests are to generate new forms of profit, power and protection. The conflict hides the real situation of narco-politics, graft and corruption, human trafficking, and excessive abuse of our natural resources.

A World Bank study states that "a shadow economy emerges to make high profits at the margin of the conflict. Political and other entrepreneurs benefit from the general insecurity and lack of rule of law to extract precious natural resources, to trade in illicit goods (e.g. drugs), and to smuggle high value commodities." People outside Mindanao do not see the underlying dynamics and intricacies as to why we support the peace process. The Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) is not a perfect document. It aims

to address the conflict so that the smoke will clear and we can all see the real situation in Mindanao. It simply aims to help us see where concentrations of power and wealth, the destruction of economic assets, and the impoverishment of vulnerable groups are situated. Thus, it may address the process of radicalization of the Bangsamoro people.

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The Virtual Reality of Youth, Radicalization, and Terrorism

Elina Noor

As the grounds of the Levant turn increasingly grisly with groups like the self-proclaimed Islamic State (IS) and Jabhat al-Nusra, a new battlefront has emerged online, attracting droves of teenagers from around the world to the bloody sectarian ganglands of Syria and Iraq.

This paper will discuss the role of technology in the radicalisation and recruitment of youth into violence in three parts. First, it will outline the evolution of online propaganda from passive websites conveying information to the masses to the personalisation of social media appealing to the youth. Second, it will explore counter-radicalisation measures online, including creative counter-narrative messaging initiatives. Finally, this paper will suggest that despite the growing trend of online propaganda, the structural drivers of extremism that appear so alluring to the youth are, in fact, offline, and should be strategically and preventatively addressed in that realm. Examples from Malaysia will be shared in each of these segments for contextual indication.

Wired for Extremism?

Although terrorism has regrettably become associated with Muslims almost by default since the millennium, the extremist groups that began exploiting the Internet to disseminate propaganda were in fact more diverse. It is the right-wing White supremacist group Stormfront that is often credited with having launched the first hate group Internet forum in the early 1990s. What started as an online bulletin board has morphed into a discussion forum that, to date, has nearly 300,000 members, and more than 800,000 conversation threads ranging from poetry and creative writing to politics and youth, spawning over 11 million posts.[1]

Shuttered from the mainstream physical space, groups such as the Liberation Tamil Tigers of Eelam (LTTE), *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC), and Communist Party of the Philippines/New People's Army (CPP/NPA) used the Internet to magnify their presence, justify their causes and actions, and recruit sympathizers across time zones and at minimal expense. Their fighters, vilified as subversive rebels

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[1] Stormfront website, https://www.stormfront.org/forum/.

and terrorists within national borders and beyond, were glorified revolutionaries or nationalists on the World Wide Web. Where the veneer of religion was used to justify violence, such as when Al-Neda was set up as Al-Qaeda's first website, fighters were holy warriors or martyrs whose eternal rewards awaited them in paradise.

Although these websites generally functioned as information portals, they differed in their presentation and messaging depending on time and target audience. Groups that entreated to the intellect rather than to sentiments projected the image of a lucid, rational victim rather than a sociopathic one. Some, like the LTTE's, were designed to appear sophisticated to appeal to a diasporic base abroad – much of which comprised adult professionals – for funding and donations. Others, such as the Pattani United Liberation Organisation's (PULO), offered an explanation of their cause in multiple languages to reach a wider range of sympathizers.

Still others were less compunctious about exploiting baser emotions through the Internet, particularly as Web 1.0 and the passive means of communication it offered evolved to become more dynamic and interactive. As connections to the Internet burgeoned from 500 million in 2001 to 2.3 billion by the end of 2011 (totalling more than one-third of the world population at that time) with 45 percent constituting users below the age of 25,[2] radical and extremist websites embraced technology and embedded the myriad multimedia options available – audio, video, RSS feed subscriptions, and even cartoons and games with flash animation for children. Images and videos chosen were often graphic, calculated to provoke and inflame in line with a narrative of being under siege and victimized or oppressed. Implicit was the message of a natural call to (re) action – violent, if necessary. Hate music, long a staple subculture of the right-wing youth community and formerly accessible *en masse* only through large-scale festivals, started being streamed online and hosted on websites like Skrewdriver Radio and Aryan Radio, specifically dedicated to White Power music.

Leveraging on the growth of mobile-enabled devices and broadband connectivity, websites adapted their content for various operating systems, at once becoming more accessible to a booming digital generation. The website of Indonesia's Front Pembela Islam once boasted availability on the platforms of BlackBerry, iPhone, iPad, and Android.

The convergence of social media and an exponential shift to smarter mobile devices, however, changed the game and the landscape of radicalisation. As blogs marked the transitory phase between traditional websites and applications like Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube, mobile traffic augmented the space the Internet provided to articulate the politics of identity and recognition, to flatten strict hierarchical structures offline, to amplify and empower the voice of the individual, and to reinforce similar viewpoints across the globe.

[2] "Measuring the Information Society 2012", International Telecommunication Union, 2012: Geneva, http://www. itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/publications/mis2012/MIS2012_without_Annex_4.pdf.

Social media offers the personalisation of a narrative through filtered lens – sometimes literally, as on Instagram. Viewed through rose- or X-Pro II-tinted filters, the harsh realities of conflict appear instead as vain-gloried distortions of adventure and poetic justice. The stories told on social media are only the half of it – spliced for brevity and the fleeting attention span of hyper-stimulated youths. Yet, it also lends a humanising element that connects the reader or viewer to the thought process of the proponent as well as to the distant struggle being fought. Before they were repeatedly taken down, the Bird of Jannah Tumblr and blog accounts of a reportedly Malaysian woman doctor in her late 20s in Syria read like the measured and compelling, if somewhat romanticised, musings of a young professional who continually rationalised her actions. Similarly, Ahmad Salman Ahmad Rahim, a Malaysian in Syria fighting for a higher cause under the cover of religion, paints a wistful and resigned yet contented picture of his experiences on Facebook. A former documentary maker, his photos and videos capture the terrain's barren ruggedness and his Spartan existence in Syria. His posts are usually contemplative and accompanied by either solitary photos of himself staring into the distance or flanked by other brothers-in-arms.

What social media – with its user-generated content – has done is heralded a do-it-yourself age of radicalisation that empowers anyone to not only have a voice or an opinion but to contribute, propagate and amplify that message at any time. Young men and women who have travelled to Iraq and Syria engage in video conversations using Snapchat or Kik; exchange tweets in 140 characters or less with hashtags, and conduct questions and answers for the curious on Ask.fm. The ubiquity of social media and its availability in multiple languages also means that posts, pages, comments and discussion can be as localized or as globalized as participants want them to be on an even greater scale than in the past.

In breaking down classical relational structures in real life, the Internet, at large, has also proven to be a perversely empowering space for conservative communities. The flattening of the virtual world coupled with round-the-clock social networking feeds means that even traditional gender gaps are deconstructed so that while some Muslim women may face cultural restrictions in, or feel uncomfortable, communicating freely with their male counterparts in the physical realm, the Internet allows that communication where it might not otherwise be socially acceptable. These women can still have their person or identity "hidden" on the Internet while communicating directly with the opposite sex and volunteering their moral or more active support in conflict-ridden areas.

Of course, for many of these young women, the feeling of global sisterhood is enhanced online – a powerful virtual bond is formed and affirmed even among strangers through social networks. Selfies of fully-covered "sisters" who moved, against their family's wishes, to IS-controlled areas in Syria punctuate social media feeds along with an amusing mix of teenage slang, text acronyms ("LOL"), emoticons ("<3") and

religious references. The women usually take on new names in their new environment, online and offline. A 21-year-old British medical student who gained notoriety posting a photo of herself holding up a severed head in Raqqa in September 2014 goes by the moniker Mujahidah bint Usama, while a 20-year-old Scot named Aqsa Mahmood who has been quite prolific on Tumblr and Twitter is known as Umm Layth (or "mother of lion", in Arabic).

For these and like-minded young women, the messaging on social media flits between beatific, peaceful images of birds (symbolic of the religious reference to *hijrah* or migration), skies, and mountains to more aggressive ones such as those posted by the British Halane twins. In one Twitter picture, the armed twins, members of IS's all-women Al-Khansaa Brigade, are with two other also-armed and *niqab*-clad friends in a gutted out room conducting "target practice".

Plugging the Gap

The figures surrounding social media are, of themselves, astounding.[3] However, the organized and professional employment of social media by groups such as IS and, more sporadically, sympathetic individual youths, to recruit other youths into extremism is daunting. There are at least three tactical ways in which Internet radicalization may be countered, online: legal, technical, and more strategically, through counter-narratives.

The laws of many countries relating to the support or commission of terrorism offences were not formulated at a time when the digital era was as pervasive as it has come to be now. Until the attacks of 11 September 2001, offline radicalism and extremism were difficult enough to legislate against and prosecute without infringing upon privacy and civil liberties. Making the online leap and proving evidentiary documentation in a domain where anonymity can be preserved in multiple ways also requires a legal acknowledgement of, and technical provisions for, advanced digital forensics.

More complicated, however, is how difficult it would be for law enforcement authorities to control public access to online material that may or may not be radical or extreme. Or, indeed, whether a determination could be made about the threshold of radical or extreme without offending free speech. This would prove particularly

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[3] YouTube's statistics report that in 2010, more than 13 million hours of video were uploaded to YouTube, at a rate of 35 hours every minute. This was equivalent to more than 150,000 full-length movies in cinemas each week. As an indication of how international just this one video streaming service was then, over 70 percent of YouTube's traffic came from outside the United States with localization in 25 countries across 43 different languages. YouTube has now garnered over 1 billion users with 300 hours of video uploaded to the site every minute. It is localized in 75 countries and available in 61 languages with half of its views on mobile devices. See YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/yt/press/statistics.html. Likewise, in 2011, Facebook had more than 500 million active users, with about half connecting via mobile. As of December 2014, that number had grown to 890 million, with 745 million being on mobile. Approximately 82.4 percent of Facebook's daily active users come from outside North America. See "Stats", Facebook, http://newsroom.fb.com/company-info/.

challenging in Western societies. In examining 15 case studies of radicalisation in the digital age, a 2013 RAND Europe report recommended that "relevant agencies re-assess the thresholds and criteria for investigation and intervention, as opportunities to access and engage with extremist material increase. This need poses a number of issues, not least whether relevant agencies have the appropriate resources".[4]

Legal responses will undoubtedly have to be dynamic and grounded in the appropriate social context. They will also, inevitably, run up against a raft of criticisms for offending civil liberties, particularly if they are preventive rather than punitive in nature. Malaysia's proposed Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA), recently tabled in parliament, has already come under fire, primarily for its potential for abuse due to its preventive nature empowering police to act faster. Under the country's current laws, however, there is no recognition for evidence – including on social media – gathered from police intelligence and surveillance. This, the government argues, hinders the detention of extremists before they execute harm and destruction. Although controversial, it is becoming increasingly apparent that there will need to be a mix of preventive and punitive laws, especially in light of the proliferation of IS sympathisers and automatons in Southeast Asia who, for various reasons including opportunistic ones, have pledged allegiance to the group's cause and threatened violence.[5]

Removing, filtering, and hiding extremist websites are quick fixes but apart from the technical difficulties these sometimes entail,[6] these methods are only temporary measures. As has happened and continues to occur, content from these websites is reproduced – even translated – elsewhere and new or mirror sites pop up almost as instantly as others are blocked or taken down.

The limitations of these tactical measures require a complementary longer-term effort of counter-radicalisation. In a free market of ideas, this would mean battling extremist ideology and interpretations with a probing critique of concepts otherwise unflinchingly accepted. It would also mean presenting a counter-narrative, if not a diverse set of counter-narratives that offer alternative insights. In order for counter-narratives to be credible rather than contrived, the messenger(s) and manner of delivery are as important as the message itself. Given that extremist and terrorist narratives arise out of real or perceived failures of the state, counter-narratives that are overtly

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[4] Ines von Behr, et al. "Radicalisation in the digital era: The use of the internet in 15 cases of terrorism and extremism", RAND Europe, 2013: Brussels, http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR400/RR453/RAND_RR453.pdf.

[5] See, for example, "BIFF, Abu Sayyaf pledge allegiance to Islamic State jihadists", *GMA News*, 16 August 2014, http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/story/375074/news/nation/biff-abu-sayyaf-pledge-allegiance-to-islamic-state-jihadists; and "IS threatens Ravi Shankar", *The Star*, 30 March 2014, http://www.thestar.com.my/News/Nation/2015/03/30/IS-threatens-Ravi-Shankar-Group-said-to-have-sent-warning-to-kill-Indian-spiritual-leader/.

[6] Taking down websites, for example, requires the hosting company to be located in the same jurisdiction and IP filtering can result in over-blocking.

government-sponsored or linked to the establishment are therefore distrusted outright and doomed to fail.

Relatedly and equally importantly, a messenger who is relatable – either by having been part of the extremist community, directly or peripherally, or by having been a victim of a terrorist attack – will appear a lot more credible because of first-hand experience with the message conveyed. Abdullah-X, whose tagline on his social media channels is "Mind of a scholar | Heart of a warrior" used to follow the fiery, extremist teachings of Abu Hamza and Omar Bakri.[7] He now seeks to provoke thought among young Muslims, particularly those vulnerable to extremist messaging, through the same new media channels terrorists use – YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter – on how these Muslims view faith, identity and their place in society.

Former extremists are also employed by state-run and –supported de-radicalisation programmes in countries like Malaysia and Indonesia to counsel detainees out of their ideology.[8] The counter-narratives they offer are usually delivered in an unthreatening fashion and with humble authority, with plenty of room for discussion and debate alongside clerics, as appropriate. Overwhelmingly, however, extremist grievances are rooted in the failures of political or socio-economic governance. Religion simply provides the ultimate justification that enervates a boldness of action otherwise missing. Although religious sanctions are a critical component of de-radicalization programmes for those using the cover of sacred texts and verses, there is also a need to address the fundamentally non-religious drivers of terrorism. In Malaysia, for example, the counter-narratives drawn in de-radicalisation programmes offer an outlet for political grievances to be aired. No subject for discussion is off the table within this safe space even if talk of politics usually makes for controversial public conversation.

In Malaysia, as well, detainees are treated with utmost respect from the time of arrest so that the trust that sometimes takes decades to forge is rooted in the right way from the very beginning. At the time of arrest, unless circumstances necessitate, the police make a concerted effort not to handcuff detainees in front of their families. Instead, detainees are asked and encouraged to voluntarily go to the detention centre with accompanying police officers. On many occasions, detainees have expressed gratitude to the police for this simple but meaningful gesture.[9] These little acts of humanity go

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[7] Abdullah-X website: http://www.abdullahx.com/. See, also, Jack Simpson, "Abdullah-X: The new cartoon made by former extremist aimed at stopping Britain's young Muslims from leaving for Syria", *The Independent*, 14 July 2014, http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/abdullahx-the-new-cartoon-made-by-former-extremist-aimed-at-stopping-britains-young-muslims-from-leaving-for-syria-9604967.html.

[8] Sara Schonhardt, "Terrorists go back to school in Indonesia", *Asia Times*, 22 July 2010, http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast_Asia/LG22Ae01.html; Prodita Sabarini, "Systematic deradicalization program needed: Expert", *The Jakarta Post*, 26 March 2010, http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2010/03/26/systematic-deradicalization-program-needed-expert.html.

[9] Author's conversations with detaining police officers.

a long way towards achieving the eventual success of de-radicalization. The inclusion of family in a comprehensive de-radicalization programme is essential to reintegrating detainees, especially youths, into normality. If social connections, online and offline, are key to the radicalization of an individual, these same connections become just as vital to their de-radicalization.

A recent counter-narrative trend has been through animation addressing problematic themes within Muslim societies in different parts of the world. One of the suppositions about the Muslim world is that in addition to the disturbing rates of illiteracy, poverty, and lack of development entrenched, it also lacks figures and heroes the community can look up to and be proud of.[10] This void is partly what makes the extremist narrative of returning to the Golden Age of Islam a millennium ago attractive. Instead of deprivation and humiliation, there is the promise of a return to glory once the semblance of an Islamic state – whatever that means – reigns supreme.

In response, content creators have come up with creative projections of wit, knowledge, and empowerment targeted at Muslim youths. The *Muslim Show* is a cartoon series about the daily life of French Muslims – their doubts, fears, hopes, and desires. It is enjoyed in some 30 Muslim-majority countries and publicised on social media with a following of more than 600,000 on Facebook. Marvel Comics launched a Muslim and female super hero named Kamala Khan (a.k.a. Ms Marvel) and *Average Mohamed*, a cartoon of a Muslim gas-station manager and brainchild of a Somali-American with the exact same job has just debuted on YouTube with an anti-terror narrative.

Making the Online-Offline Connection

Counter-narratives are an important part of the counter-terrorism equation. However, they are also only one part of that equation. The messaging that is propagated online, in particular, must be underpinned by an acknowledgement and understanding of what actually drives this radicalisation and the context it operates within on the ground.

The process of online radicalization does not fully explain how an individual makes the leap from radical and extreme thinking to, say, journeying to Syria to engage in violence or committing an act of terrorism. Other factors – psychological pre-disposition, personal trauma, environmental or social influences – also contribute to the radicalization of an individual.

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[10] In 2005, UNICEF wrote that although the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) represented one-fifth of the world's population and more than one-fourth of the developing world, and the first injunction in the Qur'an was to "read", in some countries of the OIC region, more than half the adult population remained illiterate with 70 percent of women being illiterate. As quoted in *Education and Scientific Development in the OIC Member Countries 2012/2013*, OIC Statistical Economic and Social Research and Training for Islamic Countries (SESRIC), 2012: Turkey. In 2010, the average adult literacy rate in OIC countries was 71.7 percent, below the world average of 80.1 percent and other developing countries' average of 82.5 percent, with a gender discrepancy of about 15 percent. Youth literacy of 83.9 percent was better but still below the world average of 88.9 percent.

Wade Michael Page, who fatally shot six people and wounded four others in a Sikh temple in Wisconsin in 2012, had had a failed army career, a rocky relationship and been dismissed from a series of jobs. It is hard to attribute the corresponding weight of each of these or, indeed, of Page's long-time association with White Power bands urging racial domination, to his state of mind when he terrorized the worshippers. Similarly, the question of just how much a troubled life drove Colleen Renee LaRose a.k.a. Fatima LaRose a.k.a. Jihad Jane to conspire to kill Lars Vilks in the name of religion is an open one.

On the other hand, the stories of Anders Breivik, Roshonora Choudhury, and the 14-year-old Malaysian girl who tried to go to Syria after being exposed to IS propaganda on Facebook seem to make a compelling case for linking online radicalization to an actual act of violence. Breivik took a one-year "sabbatical" to play video games as part of his two-year-long desensitization plan to carry out his attacks in Norway while Choudhury, in police interviews, admitted to listening to hours of Anwar Al-Awlaki's lectures on the Internet and "started to get really into it". Choudhury stabbed the British member of parliament Stephen Timms for voting for war in Iraq.[11]

While, on the surface, there seems to be a correlation between online radicalization and extremism and terrorism, it is harder to prove a definitive causal relationship. In the same light, it is impossible to identify a single extremist or terrorist profile even if many share broad, common characteristics such as age group and religion. Every vulnerable individual will be motivated by a combination of different push and pull factors that interact with each other. Ahmad Salman, above, is convinced he is simply fulfilling Prophet Muhammad's injunction from 1,400 years ago to fight in modern-day Syria as part of an "army of *mujahideen*" in a series of end-of-day battles. Salman's justification has an additional modern-day rationale – he is also there to avenge Muslims tortured and killed by the Assad regime, and is unaffected by portrayals of him and others as terrorists.[12] Almost always, online activities are a projection of ongoing disaffection on the ground, whether it is personal turmoil or larger real or perceived grievances at the community or even international level. For youths who are searching for answers, the virtual space offers the opportunity to consolidate their identity, explore existential questions, and make sense of their role in a complex and fast-moving world.

The young men and women from all over the world who chose to ignore desperate family entreaties against uprooting to IS-controlled areas of Syria raise disturbing

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[11] Helen Pidd, "Anders Breivik 'trained' for shooting attacks by playing Call of Duty", *The Guardian*, 19 April 2012, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/apr/19/anders-breivik-call-of-duty; Vikram Dodd, "Roshonora Choudhury: Police interview extracts", *The Guardian*, 3 November 2010, http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2010/nov/03/roshonora-choudhry-police-interview.

[12] "Eat. Pray. Jihad. Malaysians fighting for IS in Syria say Prophet demands it", *The Malay Mail*, 29 September 2014, http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/eat.-pray.-jihad.-malaysians-fighting-for-is-in-syria-say-prophet-demands-i.

questions of, among others, where the Muslim community has faltered in preparing for, and embracing modernity. However, the dilemma is not just to be resolved within the *ummah*. Developments in policies and practices worldwide that gave rise to groups like IS and that have resulted in real and perceived injustices have had enough of an impact on many youths for them to boldly shun the promises of a sound education for those of a martyr's death. After all, why struggle through life when paradise is supposedly guaranteed on the other side of destruction?

These are idealized visions of a utopia, of course, but they seem a lot more titil-lating to the young than the daily tedium of homework and assignments, the travails of relationships, and the numbing grind of a job without a grand finale worth dying for. Moderation is mundane, especially when juxtaposed with the exhilaration of ex-tremism. But when extremism is recast in apparently religious terms and pitched to those whose understanding of faith and piety is limited to literal, static, and ritualistic interpretations of the twisted, then a deeper introspection of the structural and environ-mental weaknesses that allow this extremism to fester is warranted.

While there are cautionary commentaries against directly linking issues of pov-erty and education with terrorism,[13] there is nonetheless a strong argument to be made for how a broad-based cross-cultural educational experience can be a bulwark against extremism. Rote-learning, in general, and particularly of religious texts does not contextualize the substance of what is being taught or absorbed. In many countries, students are discouraged from questioning lessons related to religion because to do so would border on the sacrilegious and amount to questioning the ultimate authority of God. Learning then no longer becomes an (inter)active pursuit of critical thought and analysis but a passive one that imposes views. Consequently, religion becomes dogma rather than a matter of personal faith. It is taught to be understood in orderly, binary terms when in reality, a believer's relationship with God is often fraught with messy complexities and frustratingly unanswered questions.

Too often these days, to appear religious means to recast life in terms of death. Perhaps one of the most valuable lessons we can teach our young – online and offline – is that life is complicated but that it is a far greater and more noble struggle ("jihad") to work through those difficulties than to take the coward's way out, by killing or being killed.

Conclusion

Technology, the youth, and extremism make for a potent, disturbing mix. The reach and speed of the Internet in the radicalization process of young men and women as exploited by extremists and terrorists since the 1990s is much more remarkable now.

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[13] See, for example, Alan B. Krueger and Jitka Malečkova´, "Education, Poverty and Terrorism: Is There a Causal Connection?" *Journal of Economic Perspectives* (17:4), Fall 2003, 119–144.

It is worth keeping in mind, however, that the Internet is simply a vector in communicating these extreme perspectives. The projection of these views in cyberspace is rather a function of the gamut of real-world factors that span personal tragedy, communal marginalization and humiliation, and policy failures.

Tackling the national security challenges that emanate from the online assertion of extremism must be grounded, first and foremost, in an acknowledgement of its offline drivers and relatedly, the limitations of only responding online. Ultimately, a counter-terrorism strategy aimed at youths must be complemented by a comprehensive whole-of-society approach at the tactical and strategic levels, online (new school) and offline (old school).

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Syria and Iraq: The Long-Term Cost of Geopolitical Destabilisation

Jörg Michael Dostal

Introduction

Writing in 2007 and addressing the question of why the United States (US) leadership headed by George W. Bush decided to occupy Iraq in 2003, the widely published Canadian journalist Gwynne Dyer argued that the end of the Cold War and economic globalization had fundamentally altered the calculus of great power politics in the Middle East: "The Cold War ended almost twenty years ago, and since then it really hasn't mattered from a strategic point of view whether Country A is 'pro-American' or 'pro-Russian.' There isn't going to be a military confrontation between the United States and Russia, and Country A will gladly sell its oil to the highest bidder regardless of ideology or alliances. By the same token, the U.S.-Israeli alliance no longer serves Washington's strategic purposes, especially since it comes with such a high diplomatic cost."[1]

Looking back at Dyer's assertions in 2015, one cannot help but think that his announcement of the end of traditional geopolitics was premature. With the exception of the first half sentence about the end of the Cold War, practically every other claim appears highly doubtful as judged from our current point of knowledge and interpretation. While it is true that there is no "war" between the US and Russia – such a war would mean the end of humanity due to mutually assured nuclear destruction – one must nevertheless observe that the self-dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 has not meant the end of geopolitical contestation between the US and Russia in the Middle East and elsewhere.

When reading Dyer, one should acknowledge that there is still no agreement about the factors that could "ultimately" explain the reasoning of US policy-makers behind the invasion of Iraq – nor is there ever going to be full agreement given that major sources of evidence will remain out of the public domain. On the other hand, much information has become public since 2003 and one can state beyond reasonable doubt that the official US and United Kingdom (UK) government claims, namely unfounded allegations about ongoing Iraqi programmes to develop weapons of mass destruction

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[1] Dyer, Gwynne, *The Mess They Made: The Middle East After Iraq*, Toronto, McClelland & Stewart, 2007, p. 41.

(WMD), did not motivate the attack. Moreover, the events of September 11, 2001 were in no way linked with Saddam Hussein.[2]

A sufficiently high number of Washington insiders have since gone on record to state with confidence that plans to occupy Iraq existed long before September 11, 2001. While the so-called "neocons" of the Project for a New American Century (PNAC) are usually acknowledged to have invented the doctrine of "regime change" in the Middle East and elsewhere in order to defend US global hegemony, one must immediately add that support for such plans did extend far beyond this group to include American nationalists in the mainstream of the Bush Jr. administration and the earlier Bill Clinton and George H. W. Bush (Bush Sr.) administrations.

Retired US general Wesley Clark, former CIA chief George Tenet and former Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill, who was also in the National Security Council between 2001 and 2002, among others, are all on record as having made statements pointing to the Bush Jr. administration's planning of the removal of Saddam Hussein prior to September 11, 2001.[3] Wesley Clark, who had earlier failed to become the presidential nominee of the Democrats in 2004 and was considering a second run in 2008, suggested in a speech delivered in 2007 that the US was engaged in regime change efforts on a large scale. He quoted a Pentagon official who, according to Clark, told him in person days after September 11, 2001 that "we're going to take out seven countries in five years, starting with Iraq, and then Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and, finishing off, Iran."[4] Although the timeline of five years has not been borne out by subsequent events, the list of countries has proved to be remarkably accurate.

Stressing the element of continuity in US power politics in the Middle East does not, in fact, require recourse to the accuracy of the personal memory of retired generals, administrators or policy-makers. Rather, it has been the official policy of the US administrations since the Eisenhower Doctrine of 1957 to consider any entrance of rival powers into the Middle East as a legitimate reason for the use of military force

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[2] Cramer, Jane K. and Thrall, A. Trevor, *Why Did the United States Invade Iraq?*, Abingdon, Oxon., Routledge, 2012, ch. 1. The authors report that many US citizens still believe that Saddam Hussein was linked with September 11, 2001.

[3] See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9RC1Mepk_Sw for the quote. See also Clark's speech at the Commonwealth Club of California, San Francisco, CA, on October 3, 2007, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TY2DKzastu8; for Tenet, see *Washington Post*, April 28, 2007; for O'Neill, see CNN.com, January 14, 2004. Numerous other sources could be added.

[4] Clark claims to quote the words of an anonymous Pentagon official who in turn is held to have quoted from a memo (see footnote 3). Some authors discussing Clark have in turn suggested that the quoted statement originated with Donald Rumsfeld, although the transcript of Clark's talk is hazy on this point. When pressed by the interviewer, Clark refused to state the name of the quoted official. See http://www.democracynow.org/2007/3/2/gen_wesley_clark_weighs_presidential_bid.

to fend off such competition.[5] The Eisenhower Doctrine continues to apply today. Its main theme of US willingness to use military power to achieve its geopolitical goal of regional dominance in the Middle East has been reinstated by virtually every US administration since then.

Most prominently, US President Jimmy Carter, then under the influence of his National Security Advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski, declared in his State of the Union Address of January 23, 1980 that "[a]n attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force."[6] In a similar vein, President Barack Obama stated in his UN Security Council speech on Syria of September 24, 2013 that the US "is prepared to use all elements of our power, including military force, to secure our core interests in the region."[7] Briefly put, US regional power politics has relied since the US rise to dominance in the Middle East on privileged alliances with local client states – Israel and Saudi Arabia as well as Iran under the Shah until 1979 and, to a lesser extent, on Egypt since the country's shift back toward US patronage in the late 1970s.

It is in the context of continuity of US behaviour in the region, enshrined in the Eisenhower Doctrine, and escalated further after the end of the Cold War with the ongoing expansion of the network of US military bases in Arab states, that this article will briefly discuss the cases of Syria and Iraq. To be sure, this analytical focus on US power is not the only valid approach. In addition, geopolitical inquiry in the age of the Internet suffers neither from a scarcity of sources nor from secrecy as such. Instead, there exists an abundance of plausible sources that allow for more than one equally plausible interpretation of the evidence.

The remainder of this article briefly sketches some geopolitical features of the Middle East (section 1) before providing a brief overview about Syrian and Iraqi geopolitical history until the most recent cycles of conflict (sections 2 and 3). Sections 4 and 5 discuss the most recent crisis cycle in Iraq since 2003 and in Syria since 2011. Thus, the article's purpose is to highlight why Syria and Iraq became targets of US power politics and how this destabilization has escalated pre-existing ethnic and sectarian tensions in the region, which could undermine the continuing existence of both states.

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[5] See http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=11007&st=&st1 for the full text of Eisenhower's "Special Message to the Congress on the Situation in the Middle East" [i.e., "the Doctrine"], delivered on January 5, 1957. Stressing his primarily geopolitical rather than ideological concerns, Eisenhower claimed that "Russia's rulers have long sought to dominate the Middle East. That was true of the Czars and is true of the Bolsheviks" (ibid.).

[6] See http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=33079.

[7] See http://gadebate.un.org/sites/default/files/gastatements/68/US_en_0.pdf, p. 5.

1. The Geopolitics of the Middle East

Modern Syria and Iraq are essentially the product of the secret 1916 Sykes-Picot Agreement between Britain and France about the division of the Middle East into a "Zone A" (the area designated as the French zone of influence comprising what became Lebanon and Syria) and a "Zone B" (the area designated as the British zone of influence comprising what subsequently became Palestine, Jordan and Iraq). This drafting of colonial border lines – subsequently approved at the request of both powers under the "Mandate" of the League of Nations – portended long-term structural problems for Syria and Iraq in the post-colonial period. In the Syrian case, the French handed over the north-western border region of the Mandate (the Sanjak of Alexandretta) to Turkey. In addition, Lebanon was parcelled off from Syria.[8] As for Iraq, the country was constructed with borders with six other states but with very limited access to the Persian Gulf. Its ethnic and sectarian composition was likely to trigger conflict with its neighbours.[9]

The history of post-colonial statehood in Syria and Iraq began in 1946 and 1958, respectively. In the Syrian case, the country became independent at least partially due to an informal coalition between the US and the UK, pushing for French withdrawal from the Middle East at the end of World War 2, which helped local Arab nationalists to achieve independence. In the case of Iraq, the revolution of 1958 destroyed the British-controlled monarchy and the country gained independence under the leadership of the local military. Both countries were made up of different sects (most prominently Sunni and Shia Muslims and Christians of different denominations) and included significant non-Arab ethnic minorities of Kurds and other groups.

It is, however, impossible to discuss the history of Syria and Iraq – territorial nations rather than nation states – without looking at the larger regional picture of power relationships in the Arab world, especially the emergence of modern pan-Arab nationalism in Egypt around the same time. Here, Gamal Abdel Nasser's Free Officer Movement removed the British-backed monarchy in 1952. Subsequently, Nasser skilfully played different outside powers against each other, gaining substantial political autonomy in the process, and Egypt quickly acquired a leadership role in the Arab world. Following his decision to nationalize the Suez Canal in 1956, a tripartite military attack from France, the UK and Israel tried to remove him from power.

[8] Seale, Patrick, *The Struggle for Arab Independence: Riad el-Solh and the Makers of the Modern Middle East*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010, pp. 579-583.

[9] Musallam, Musallam Ali, *The Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait: Saddam Hussein, his State and International Power Politics*, London, British Academic Press, 1996, pp. 63, 68, 80.

Eisenhower sensed that the Suez invasion was a doomed effort of the declining European colonial powers to retain their position in the Middle East and refused to back it financially. Only eight weeks after the failed invasion, the Eisenhower Doctrine was issued and this date underlined imperial succession in the Middle East – the transition from UK to US regional dominance. Meanwhile, Nasser first asked the US for economic and military assistance and, meeting intransigence, turned to the Soviet Union, which quickly granted substantial support. These events ushered in a new regional system, namely the division of the Middle East into an US-backed camp (Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Iran under the Shah between 1953 and 1979) and a Soviet-backed camp (Egypt between 1956 and 1978, Syria between 1956 and 1961, and since 1963, and Iraq between 1958 and the 1980s).[10] Other Arab states, such as Jordan and Lebanon, were too weak to play much of an independent role in this regional conflict.

2. The Geopolitics of Modern Syria

Syria's leadership after independence in 1946 initially consisted of the traditional landed gentry of Sunni Muslim origin that did form a notionally democratic presidential republic. However, this group lacked the necessary resources to engage in modern mass politics and the country was short of regional or other external patronage to back up its independent position in the early Cold War period. Moreover, Arab nationalist discourse after WW2 focused on abstract calls for unity of the "Arab nation" when faced with the Zionist settlement project in Palestine. In reality, the Arab states were mostly engaged in infighting about regional leadership and threatened each other with hostile takeover.[11]

In the Syrian context, the short experiment with a deeply flawed democracy came to an end in 1949 when three military coups in a single year resulted in the rise of a series of strongmen who aspired to lead Syria, but each lasting only until the next coup. At least two of the three coups included some involvement of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), acting in the service of US oil companies keen to enforce the assent of Syria's leadership to oil pipeline projects intended to link US-controlled Saudi oil fields with the Mediterranean and West European markets.[12]

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[10] Stephens, Robert, *Nasser. A Political Biography*, London, Penguin, 1971, ch. 8.

[11] Seale, Patrick, *The Struggle for Syria. A Study of Post-War Arab Politics*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1965.

[12] Dostal, Jörg Michael, "Post-Independence Syria and the Great Powers (1946-1958): How Western Power Politics Pushed the Country Toward the Soviet Union," Annual Meeting of the Academic Council of the United Nations System, June 19-21, 2014, Istanbul, http://acuns.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/Syria-Paper-1946-1958-for-ACUNS-Conference-Website-12-June-2014.pdf.

The most sophisticated of the three Syrian military leaders of this period, Adib Shishakli, who remained in power from 1949 to 1954, appealed to the US leadership for backing and offered privileged access to Syria on the condition that the US would take a more balanced position in the conflict between Arab nationalism and Zionism – an offer subsequently vetoed by Israel and rejected by Eisenhower. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Syrian politics became defined by the rise of modern ideological politics – mostly represented by Baathists, Communists and Syrian nationalists – and by the increasing role of the army as the only working national institution that soon turned into the actual source of political power.

Ultimately, officers linked with the Baath Party gained power in a 1963 coup at the expense of the other forces. The Baathist ideology of pan-Arab and largely secular Arab nationalism – although the party's slogan "One indivisible Arab nation with an eternal mission" also refers to Islam – was originally developed by the Greek Orthodox Christian Michel Aflaq and the Sunni Muslim Salah al-Din al-Bitar. In 1966, the so-called "neo-Baath," which combined pan-Arab nationalism with leftist ideas, side-lined the founding generation of Baathism in Syria. This new collective leadership of military men was in turn replaced by Hafiz al-Assad (Syria's president between 1971 and 2000) during the so-called "Correction Movement" of 1970 that reintroduced a more centrist political line of the Baath and made efforts to expand the coalition running Syria to include more Sunnis, including sections of the traditional Sunni bourgeoisie.

Most crucially, different interpretations of Baathist ideology served to hide the actual conflict lines of Syrian politics derived from sect, family, region and social class. Over time, the Alawites, a religious minority to which the Assad family belongs and that is mostly settled around the Mediterranean city of Latakia, had gained the ascendancy in the command structure of the Syrian army. Since the army was the most stable institution, the Alawites – initially recruited by the French authorities into the local armed forces during the period of the Mandate – acquired influence in all other branches of the Syrian state too. However, one must stress that this authority was always managed in alliances with the other groups of Syrian society and Syrian politics cannot be reduced to issues of sectarianism.

Two major developments added to the increasing dominance of the military and the national security state in Syria. The first factor was the country's defeat in the 1967 war with Israel that resulted in the occupation of the Syrian Golan Heights by Israel. This occupation of Syrian territory is illegal according to numerous United Nations (UN) resolutions. Since 1967, Syria's leadership has made military efforts (recovery of some territory in the 1973 war) and engaged in diplomacy (failed negotiations of Syria's

President Hafiz al-Assad with Israel during much of the 1990s) to recover the Golan, and the issue remains at the core of the conflict between Israel and Syria.[13]

The second major conflict within Syria was the uprising of the Syrian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood against the Baath regime in the late 1970s and early 1980s, which amounted to a lengthy terrorist campaign against representatives of the Syrian state in general and Alawites in particular. Crucially, the Brotherhood, whose support in Syria was always very limited, received extensive sponsorship from neighbouring countries. In particular, Saddam Hussein was keen to bring down the Syrian leadership.[14] This episode highlighted the fact that the Syrian and Iraqi Baath regimes, although both notionally committed to pan-Arab nationalism and backed up by Soviet patronage, were for almost the entirety of their coexistence deeply hostile to each other. The conflict remained one of the most significant long-term features of Arab politics during the 1970s and 1980s.[15]

3. The Geopolitics of Modern Iraq

In Iraq, the development of the modern state shared some features with neighbouring Syria. After the 1958 revolution, General Abd al-Karim Qasim became Prime Minister and promoted an Iraqi nationalism that reached out to the Kurdish minority and relied at times on an alliance with the Communists whose stronghold was concentrated among oil workers who were mostly Shia Muslims. The new regime soon faced domestic opposition from Nasserist and Baathist forces. Uprisings and coups in 1959, 1963 and 1968 ultimately allowed the Iraqi Baath party to gain power, first under the leadership of Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr and then, officially since July 1979 but in reality earlier, under Saddam Hussein.

In order to further explain the regional role of Syria and Iraq, one must focus on two more levels of analysis. The first one is the military build-up of both states backed by Soviet assistance, which largely removed the two states from the direct reach of US regional power politics. The wars between Israel and some Arab states in 1967 and 1973 resulted in Arab defeats. Israel received much larger military assistance from the US than Brezhnev's Soviet Union was willing to grant its Arab allies. Nevertheless, the 1973 war appeared to show that Egypt, Syria and Iraq could possibly succeed in establishing strategic parity with Israel, since their military performance improved

[13] Ghani, Jasmine K., "Understanding and Explaining US-Syrian Relations: Conflict and Cooperation, and the Role of Ideology," Ph.D., London School of Economics and Political Science, 2011, http://etheses.lse.ac.uk/348/1/Gani_Understanding%20and%20Explaining%20US-Syrian%20Relations.pdf, pp. 231-240.

[14] See the declassified US Defense Intelligence Agency file "Syria: Muslim Brotherhood: Pressure Intensifies," May 1982, https://syria360.files.wordpress.com/2013/11/dia-syria-muslimbrotherhoodpressureintensifies-2.pdf. The document describes the Brotherhood as a "Sunni Muslim Islamist fundamentalist organization" (p. iii).

[15] Kienle, Eberhard, *Ba'ath versus Ba'ath: The Conflict between Syria and Iraq*, London, I.B. Taurus, 1990.

significantly after lessons of defeat in the 1967 war had been learned. The US reacted to this development in two ways. On the one hand, Israel received even more military supplies and became the only country in the Middle East with a nuclear arsenal (the US had from the start acted as Israel's main economic supporter and had replaced France as Israel's major arms supplier in the 1960s). In addition, the US expanded its military supplies to the two other regional clients, Saudi Arabia and the Shah's Iran, significantly.

The Nixon Doctrine, issued in 1969, appeared to break with the earlier Eisenhower Doctrine in the sense that US client states were asked to take greater responsibility for their defence rather then rely on direct US military intervention. However, in practice both Doctrines mutually reinforced each other: the Nixon Doctrine provided for the recycling of petro dollars – oil dollars were turned into purchase of US military hardware – and "what began as an effort to build up and empower surrogates, client states in the Gulf that would do the bidding of the United States, proved instead to be the gateway for more direct projection of American military power."[16] For most of the 1970s, both superpowers maintained a regional balance of forces, with the Soviet Union acting in a junior role and certainly not receiving much by way of return for its regional engagement.[17] This situation changed, however, when the US managed to regain control of Egyptian domestic politics during the rule of President Anwar Sadat. Removing "the strongest country from the Arab line-up" after Sadat's unilateral turn toward negotiations with Israel in 1978 guaranteed, according to a prominent observer, "Israeli dominance for 30 years."[18]

The second important geopolitical level of analysis to explain US interest in the containment of Syria and Iraq during this period concerned economic affairs. Until the 1970s, the Arab states outside of the US sphere of influence essentially relied on Soviet military assistance for defence purposes and to contain domestic conflict. Yet their weak economic base did not allow for socioeconomic modernization. In the case of Iraq, the Iraqi Petroleum Company (IPC) had remained in the hands of a foreign consortium controlled by the UK, the US and France. In the early 1970s, this framework of economic control finally broke down. First, new oil discoveries in Syria – modest by Iraqi standards – allowed the country to join the group of oil states. Meanwhile, the Iraqi government signed a treaty of friendship with the Soviet Union on April 9, 1972 and then nationalized the IPC on July 1, 1972 without compensating western oil interests. This decision triggered in turn a move by the US to end diplomatic relations.

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[16]   Jones, Toby Craig, "America, Oil, and War in the Middle East," *Journal of American History*, 99, 1, 2012, p. 210.

[17]   The Arab nationalist regimes regularly repressed domestic Communist Parties (especially in Egypt and in Iraq) while Soviet economic assistance for the Arabs did not deliver direct rewards for the oil-rich Soviet Union.

[18]   Seale, Patrick, "The Syrian Crisis and the New Cold War," agenceglobal.com, February 7, 2012.

In fact, the nationalization of Iraqi oil wealth combined with rising oil prices after the 1973 war between Israel and the Arabs resulted in the most rapid expansion of government revenue in the country's history. Between 1972 and 1980, Iraqi oil revenue increased more than 30 times according to Iraqi government figures.[19] As a result, the Iraqi leadership started to enjoy considerable autonomy from outside influences and domestic pressures. The rising oil rents allowed Iraq and, to a lesser extent, Syria to become rentier states governed by powerful state classes.[20] Both regimes were now in a position to engage in socio-economic reform and a military build-up at the same time.

The expansion of oil wealth in Syria and Iraq allowed the shift from developing to transition country status. From the 1970s onwards, urbanization advanced quickly, the education system expanded, the status of women was raised and state revenue was spread in far enough a manner to improve general living standards. In Syria, oil revenue remained limited and much of the increase in government revenue was spent on the country's military in the ultimately overambitious effort to achieve strategic parity with Israel.[21] By contrast, Iraq's much larger oil rents enabled Saddam Hussein to engage in efforts to acquire a leadership position in the Arab world following Sadat's 1978 decision to sign a unilateral peace treaty with Israel (the Camp David Accord). Iraqi efforts to replace Egyptian leadership appeared at times rather successful, such as during a meeting in Baghdad in November 1978 in which all Arab states with the exception of Egypt participated to underline their joint rejection of Sadat's position.[22] In parallel, Iraq expanded its military based on French and Soviet supplies and modernized its economy by importing infrastructure from western countries other than the US.

Yet the rise of autonomous state classes in Syria and Iraq questioned from the US point of view the balance of power in the region. In particular, Saddam Hussein's aspiration for regional Arab leadership was considered a significant threat and, following the nationalization of the Iraqi oil industry, the Nixon administration turned to the Shah of Iran and, between 1972 and 1976, sold more weapons to Iran than any other country in the region. The Shah became the US's closest ally in its efforts to contain Iraq, and the US supported his request to finance Kurdish separatists in Northern Iraq

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[19]   Such figures are quoted in Hussain, Abdul J. O., "The Oil Industry and Missed Opportunities in Iraq," *European Journal of Accounting, Auditing and Finance Research*, 2, August 2014, p. 8. All available data points to a large-scale expansion of revenue between 1972 and 1980, a major decline during the war years, and a near-disappearance of the oil rent in the early 1990s due to the sanctions.

[20]   For the concept of the "state class" and its relative autonomy from western powers, see Elsenhans, Hartmut, *Abhängiger Kapitalismus oder bürokratische Entwicklungsgesellschaft: Versuch über den Staat in der Dritten Welt*, Frankfurt/M.: Campus, 1984.

[21]   Seale, Patrick, *Asad: The Struggle for the Middle East*, Berkeley, Cal.: University of California Press, 1995.

[22]   Lustick, Ian S., "The Absence of Middle Eastern Great Powers: Political 'Backwardness' in Historical Perspective," *International Organization*, 51, 4, p. 672.

to put pressure on the Iraqi leadership.[23] This move proved successful enough to force Baghdad to make concessions to the Shah regarding the Shatt al-Arab border disputes (the contested area between Iraq and Iran that made up Iraq's tight access point to the Persian Gulf). Saddam Hussein's subsequent signing of an agreement with the Shah purchased the Iranian withdrawal of support for the Iraqi Kurds (the so-called Algiers agreement of June 13, 1975). Following this agreement, the Shah ended support for Iraqi Kurds and Iraq and Iran both started to repress Kurdish separatist movements.[24]

The Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979 led to the downfall of the Shah regime and appeared to dramatically weaken US power in the region. Saddam Hussein's decision to attack Iran in 1980 was an effort to take advantage of the domestic disorganisation in Iran that had weakened the country's military. The war goal was to improve Iraqi access to the Persian Gulf and to overturn the concessions that Iraq had made to the Shah's Iran with regard to the Shatt al-Arab border issues in the 1976 Algiers Agreement. There is not enough space here for a detailed analysis of the eight-year war in which Iraq repeatedly used WMDs (chemical weapons) in the trench warfare against Iranian troops and in the domestic conflict with Iraqi Kurds. It is sufficient to stress that Iraq received between 1980 and 1988 massive supplies of arms from abroad while Iran's external support was comparatively limited. When the initial Iraqi offensive nevertheless came to a halt and the war started to turn against Iraq in 1983, the Reagan administration became concerned about an Iranian military victory. In this situation, President Reagan dispatched Donald Rumsfeld as a special envoy to Baghdad and, following talks with Saddam Hussein, the National Security Decision Directive 139 of the Reagan administration instructed in April 1984 to prepare "a plan of action designed to avert an Iraqi [military] collapse."[25]

Although this effort at "rebalancing" on the part of the US did not result in massive direct delivery of US weapons to Iraq – this role was mostly performed by France and the Soviet Union – the US started to supply intelligence such as satellite pictures of Iranian military positions to the Iraqi military. The US and other western countries (West Germany, Spain and Italy) also delivered components to supply the Iraqi chemical weapons programme. While some of these deliveries were "dual use" (i.e., they could be used for civilian and military purposes), the concerned western states continued such deliveries even after it had become clear that the Iraqi army used chemical

[23] Kiely, Patrick, "Through distorted lenses: Iraq and balance of power politics 1969-1979," in Ryan, David and Kiely, Patrick (eds), *America and Iraq. Policy-making, intervention and regional politics*, London, Routledge, 2009, pp. 44, 46.

[24] Kostiner, Joseph, *Conflict and Cooperation in the Gulf Region*, Wiesbaden, Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2009, pp. 39-41.

[25] "Measures to Improve U.S. Posture and Readiness to Respond to Developments in the Iran-Iraq War," April 5, 1984, p. 2, see http://fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdd/nsdd-139.pdf.

weapons for purposes of domestic reprisal against the Kurds and against the Iranian army on multiple occasions.[26]

While Iraq clearly received the overwhelming share of foreign arms supplies between 1980 and 1988, the "rebalancing" was flexible enough for occasional supplies to Iran too. The US and Israel delivered, for example, large quantities of anti-tank missiles to the Iranian military (some of it as part of the "Iran-Contra Deal").[27] Overall, the "rebalancing" served the purpose of keeping the war going and weakening both sides economically.

After the end of the inconclusive war with Iran, Saddam Hussein took the decision to occupy neighbouring Kuwait on August 2, 1990. This action was intended as a means to settle the Iraqi war debt with the richer Sunni Gulf states, which had financed Iraq's war with Iran from their oil revenue while much of the Iraqi production had been stopped between 1980 and 1988. The Iraqi occupation of Kuwait allowed the US administration of George H. W. Bush to assemble a coalition of western and regional powers (including Syria) that subsequently forced the Iraqi troops out of Kuwait in 1991 in what is termed in western accounts as the "First Gulf War" – although it was the Second Gulf War from the point of view of the Iraqis and Iranians. The western intervention of 1990-1991 "liberated" Kuwait (the pro-western family regime was restored) but stopped short of removing Saddam Hussein from power. Crucially, the US used the conflict to ask Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states to open their borders for what subsequently turned into permanent US military bases and installations.[28]

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[26] In this context, US authorities have only recently acknowledged (Chivers, C. J., "The Secret Casualties of Iraq's Abandoned Chemical Weapons," *New York Times*, October 14, 2014) that weapons of mass destruction were discovered after the occupation of Iraq in 2003. Yet these arms caches were not evidence of an Iraqi WMD programme after 1990 but consisted of deteriorating chemical weapons from the time of the Iraq-Iran war. The disclosure was delayed because the US military leadership was unwilling to acknowledge that US soldiers were exposed to harmful substances in efforts to dispose of the weapons by exploding them via open-air detonation. According to the same author, these actions could amount to offences against the chemical weapons convention (*New York Times*, November 22, 2014). The US authorities have so far refused to disclose site locations where chemical weapons were blown up. One can therefore only speculate about how Iraqi civilians might have been affected.

[27] See the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute website for authoritative data on arms exports during the 1980-1988 Iraq-Iran war.

[28] See Vine, David, http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2014/11/america-still-has-hundreds-military-bases-worldwide-have-they-made-us-any-safer for a recent narrative about US military bases and deployment in the Middle East and elsewhere. Since the 1990s, the US has expanded their permanent military presence in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Oman. Although officially moving away from combat operations, the US continues to maintain or has redeployed significant numbers of troops in Afghanistan and Iraq. The actual number of troops is subject to change but the facilities to allow quick deployment have stayed in place.

The war was followed by a UN economic embargo of Iraq, once again targeting Iraqi oil exports, to stop the country from rearming its military. However, the actual outcome of the UN sanctions regime was the devastation of the Iraqi health and education system, the rise of illiteracy and the destruction of the remnants of the Iraqi middle class.[29] According to two UN humanitarian relief coordinators, who both resigned from their Baghdad posting in protest over the sanctions, the effort to block practically all trade "destroyed society in Iraq and caused the death of thousands, young and old."[30] The sanctions were backed up by two US- and UK-policed no-flight zones in the northern and southern Iraqi air space which officially served to protect Iraqi Kurds and Shias from strikes by the Iraqi air force. In these two zones, US and UK air forces conducted more than 200,000 sorties between 1991 and 2003 and regularly attacked Iraqi targets. This unacknowledged air war only became reported due to the ad hoc collection of data by the UN security section in Baghdad, which pointed to a pattern of at least two attacks per week in 1999.[31]

Before turning to the most recent events in Iraq since the occupation in 2003 and in Syria since 2011, one should therefore stress that the current conflicts are the continuation of earlier escalations. Indeed, Iraq has now suffered from war or war-like conditions for thirty-five years.

4. The Crisis Cycle in Iraq since 2003

This section is not going to retell the story of the US and UK occupation of Iraq between 2003 and 2012, which is still part of recent memory. The usual criticisms, such as the failure of the occupying forces to maintain law and order; the mistake of dissolving the old Iraqi state and military without putting any working new structures in place; the failure to protect civilians in general and religious and ethnic minorities in particular; and the large-scale destruction of the infrastructure and cultural heritage, have been extensively covered elsewhere.[32] Instead, analysis is going to focus on three other crucial points in the context of Iraq's geopolitical role. First, the politics of Iraqi oil since 2003

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[29] Hashim, Ahmed S., *Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency in Iraq*, London: Hurst, 2006, p. 111.

[30] Sponeck, Hans von and Haliday, Dennis, "The hostage nation," *Guardian*, November 29, 2001. There are various estimates pointing to large-scale deaths of Iraqis due to the sanction-induced breakdown of the country's health system and infrastructure.

[31] "Airstrikes in Iraq," UN Security Section – Baghdad, http://www.casi.org.uk/info/undocs/airstrikes1.html. In another instance, "Operation Desert Fox" in December 1998 involved large-scale officially acknowledged US and UK air strikes against the Iraqi military. From May 2002 onwards, the undeclared air war against Iraq was further escalated in preparation for the subsequent invasion.

[32] Cf. Dodge, Toby, *Iraq: From War to a New Authoritarianism*, London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2012, pp. 16-25. The author suggests (p. 25) that "after 2003, Iraq's position as a failed state might have been more destabilizing for the region than the rogue state run by Saddam." One cannot help but note similarities with the more recent Libyan case.

as the economic foundation of Iraqi statehood is briefly sketched. Second, the future geopolitical alignment of Iraq in the regional and global context is discussed. These two issues must be considered jointly since command over the national oil revenue and Iraq's political leadership mutually determine each other. In fact, these two points are most crucial in order to judge whether or not the US and UK achieved at least some of their intended political objectives. Third, this section considers the emergence of the so-called "Islamic State in Iraq and Syria" (ISIS) militia since mid-2014 in the context of the larger Middle East conflict.

Starting with the oil issue, one should stress that the occupation of Iraq was of course not *only* about oil. One can also disagree about the extent to which US economic and political goals were advanced by the militarily imposed political economy of oil in Iraq.[33] What is beyond doubt, however, is that the actual outcome of the reorganization of the country's oil industry constitutes the most significant single factor as far as the future viability of the Iraqi state and its institutions is concerned. Thus, it is an important observation in its own right that Iraq's oil production and exports post-2003 were in fact little affected by "failed statehood." Indeed, with the exception of a small dip in 2005, Iraqi oil production nearly doubled between 2004 and 2012 to reach a 30-year peak (and second-highest production level ever after 1978).[34] Subsequently, this upturn has been sustained and the latest available data on oil production from December 2014 pointed to the "highest amount on record."[35]

The protective attitude of the occupying forces toward Iraqi oil sources was already noticeable at the moment of the invasion and "of the fifteen hundred oil wells in Iraq's two major oil fields, only nine were damaged during the war."[36] Directly afterwards, the US political leadership might have misjudged the strength of its position, since the initial plans were little more than the suggestion that the Iraqi oil wealth should be directly appropriated by US construction and oil interests. However, this initial plan (the Executive Order 13303) of the Bush administration to exercise control over Iraqi oil revenue by means of a "Development Fund for Iraq" – which included earlier Iraqi oil revenue that had been put under UN supervision before the invasion under the "Oil for Food" programme – quickly fell apart due to large-scale irregularity in the management of the funds. Following the departure of the Paul Bremer-led Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) administration in June 2004 – after the signing of "Order 17" which granted immunity to the CPA and the US government from Iraqi law courts

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[33] Alhajji, Anas F., "The US and the geopolitics of Middle Eastern oil," in Looney, Robert E. (ed.), *Handbook of US-Middle East Relations*, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2009, pp. 121-122, 125.

[34] See "BP Statistical Review of World Energy 2014" for historical tables on Iraqi oil production.

[35] Graeber, Daniel J., "Iraqi oil production setting records," upi.com, February 9, 2015. The author notes that the "Islamic State insurgency wasn't having much of an impact on the overall oil sector in Iraq."

[36] Mayer, Jane, "Contract Sport, What did the Vice-President do for Halliburton?," *New Yorker*, February 16, 2004.

for unaccounted funds – the Iraqi government shifted back, since 2009, to a policy of contracting with oil companies from various countries.

From the point of view of interaction between oil production and Iraqi statehood, the 2003 occupation cleared some earlier barriers for the expansion of Iraqi oil production. In particular, the occupation allowed for new investment in the oil infrastructure and for expansion of the capacity of the Basra harbour terminals in the Shatt al-Arab. These terminals had been one of the "choke points" for Iraqi oil exports due to the conflict with Iran but are now the place from which almost all of Iraq's oil is shipped.[37] The largest southern oil fields of Iraq are most relevant for Iraqi government revenue while the northern oil fields in the Kurdish autonomous region, estimated at a tenth or so of Iraq's total, suffer from the lack of (reliable) export pipelines and disagreement about the distribution of potential revenue between the Baghdad government and the Kurdish regional government.[38] Another oil region, the area around Kirkuk, is disputed between the Kurdish authorities and Baghdad, and contracts between the Kurdish authorities and international oil companies have been declared unconstitutional.[39]

At present, the Iraqi central government continues to control the country's pipeline system and exercises allocation powers over oil contracts outside of the contested Kurdish oil fields. Most of the post-2009 contracts have gone to western companies, notably BP, Exxon Mobil and Shell, although one observer stressed that "they gave a little piece of the cake for China and some other countries and companies to keep them silent."[40] In summary, the oil contract game and the question of who has the authority to allocate the oil rent will decide the future of Iraqi statehood.

This directly leads to the question of who is going to control future statehood in Iraq. The major shift after the occupation was the replacement of the Sunni-dominated Saddam regime with a Shia-dominated post-Saddam regime in Baghdad. The Kurdish regional authorities were also keen to strengthen their autonomy and bargaining power.

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[37] "Iraq returns as world's fastest-growing oil exporter," reuters.com, March 5, 2014.

[38] See International Energy Agency, *Iraq Energy Outlook*, October 9, 2012, pp. 23, 36, 38, 55. The report asks "which entities should have the power to authorize and conclude [oil] contracts" and warns of "consequences that arise for Iraq from the absence of a consistent country-wide policy in such a strategic sector" (p. 38). The problem of who is entitled to sign contracts results from Article 109 of the Iraqi Constitution of 2005 stating that the federal government "shall undertake the management of oil and gas extracted from *current* fields" (emphasis added), leaving open the issue of how to administer new oil fields.

[39] Mills, Robin M., "Northern Iraq's Oil Chessboard: Energy, Politics and Power," *Insight Turkey*, 15, 1, 2013. Moreover, Baghdad and the Kurdish authorities disagree about how to contract with foreign oil companies. Baghdad favours technical service contracts, limiting the profit share of foreign investors, while the Kurdish regional government has signed (contested) production sharing agreements. The latter method favours international oil companies and is not frequently used. However, such contracts were in place before the nationalization of Iraqi oil in 1972.

[40] Abdulhay Yahya Zalloum, quoted in Jamail, Dahr, "Western oil firms remain as US exits Iraq. The end of the US military occupation does not mean Iraqis have full control of their oil," *Aljazeera*, January 7, 2012.

From the US point of view, the major unintended consequence was the strengthening of Shia political power, both within Iraq and in the Middle East region, based on a de facto alliance between the Baghdad government under Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki and the Islamic Republic of Iran, still in place under Maliki's successor, the current Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi.[41] In addition, sectarian conflicts in Iraq since 2003 triggered the rise of militias, mostly Shia, and the Iraqi army, equipped and trained by the US, also became Shia-dominated, not least because the earlier Sunni-dominated army had been dissolved.

The US reacted to this rise of Shia power with efforts to "rebalance" in favour of Sunnis in Iraq and in the Middle East region. This shift of US strategy included direct or indirect – via Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Turkey – sponsorship of Sunni militants.[42] Notably, the US military tried to link up with Sunni tribal leaders in Iraq to use them as "force multipliers" during the so-called "surge" around 2007 in counter-insurgency efforts – often against other Sunni insurgents fighting the US occupation. In this context, the alienation of Sunnis by the new Shia-dominated Baghdad government was due to their large-scale exclusion from political influence for which the US and UK occupiers share responsibility with Iran. Overall, Shia-affiliated political parties and militias continue to dominate Iraq's central government. Only an adequate sharing of power between all groups in Iraq can in the long run stabilize the state.

In the meantime, Shia militias with embedded Iranian military advisors have provided the manpower for the recent advances of the Iraqi government against the ISIS militia since March 2015. Most adequately, one might interpret the emergence of ISIS as an "evolution" of earlier extremist Sunni militias with Al-Qaida affiliations.[43] The major analytical question concerns responsibility for the rise of ISIS. In order to answer this question, one must first of all stress the permanent mutation of Sunni-extremist insurgency groups in Iraq and in the Middle East.

Earlier rounds of the Iraqi conflict during the US-led "surge" in 2007 produced an alliance of US troops with Sunni tribal leaders in Anbar province and other Sunni regions of Iraq. These tribal leaders were in turn well-connected with fellow tribe members in Saudi Arabia and Syria. They accepted US military supplies to strengthen their hand against Al-Qaida and the Baghdad government. According to one tribal leader, the alliance was "a way to get arms, and to be a legalised security force to be able to stand against Shia militias and to prevent the Iraqi army and police from entering their

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[41] Nasser, Nicola, "Who Has More Influence? Rapprochement with US Reinforces Iran Hand in Iraq," *Sri Lanka Guardian*, October 3, 2013.

[42] Hersh, Seymour H., "The Redirection. Is the Administration's new policy benefitting our enemies in the war on terrorism?," *New Yorker*, March 5, 2007.

[43] Hashim, Ahmed S., "From Al-Qaida Affiliate to the Rise of the Islamic Caliphate: The Evolution of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)," *Policy Report*, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, December 2014, p. 11.

[Sunni tribal] area." The same informant compared the US position with "someone who brought cats to fight rats, found himself with too many cats and brought dogs to fight the cats. Now they need elephants."[44]

It is clear that the "success" of the US-led "surge" against Al-Qaida in Iraq in 2007 produced new security risks. The same apply to subsequent efforts by the US to train Sunnis in the context of the US-supplied Iraqi army. After the ISIS uprising in Iraq in June 2014, the weapons of Sunni units of the Iraqi army were largely abandoned and taken over by ISIS militants. In neighbouring Syria, ISIS also gained weapons from many other sources, such as anti-tank rockets that had earlier been transferred by Saudi Arabia to forces operating under the "Free Syrian Army" umbrella.[45]

In terms of overall responsibility for the rise of Sunni Islamist extremists, US Vice-President Joseph Biden said in an unscripted question-and-answer session with students at Harvard University on 2 October 2014, "our allies in the region were our largest problem." He argued that Turkey, the Saudis and the Emirates "were so determined to take down Assad and essentially have a proxy Sunni-Shia war…. They poured hundreds of millions of dollars and tens of thousands of tons of weapons into anyone who would fight against Assad – except that the people who were being supplied were Al-Nusra and Al-Qaida and the extremist elements of jihadists coming from other parts of the world."[46]

He added, "[T]his outfit called ISIL [i.e., another abbreviation for ISIS], which was Al-Qaida in Iraq … worked with Al-Nusra, who we declared a terrorist group early on, and we could not convince our colleagues to stop supplying them. Now all of a sudden…the President [Obama] has been able to put together a coalition of our Sunni

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[44] Abdul-Ahad, Ghaith, "Meet Abu Abed: the US's new ally against al-Qaida," *Guardian*, November 10, 2007. Indeed, more recent press coverage underlines that US analysts, in efforts to "defeat the Islamic State by fostering Sunni resistance," demand "greater autonomy for Sunni provinces, like that granted to the Iraqi Kurds" to "persuade Sunnis to rebel against the Islamic State." See Pape, Robert A., "Getting ISIS out of Iraq," *International New York Times*, April 21, 2015. The idea that further division of Iraq will help to defeat ISIS deserves to be compared with the "elephants" quoted in the 2007 article.

[45] Conflict Armament Research, "Islamic State Weapons in Iraq and Syria. Analysis of weapons and ammunition captured from Islamic State forces in Iraq and Syria," September 2014, http://www.conflictarm.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Dispatch_IS_Iraq_Syria_Weapons.pdf, p. 6.

[46] For Biden's extraordinary Harvard statements, see in particular the section 53:24 to 59:12 minutes, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dcKVCtg5dxM. Referring to arms deliveries from US regional allies to the Islamist extremists, Biden asked the rhetorical question, "Where did all of this go?" He forgot to ask the necessary follow-up question, "Where did all of this come from?"

neighbours because Americans can't once again went [*sic*] to a Muslim nation and be the aggressor, it has to be led by Sunnis to go and attack a Sunni organization."[47]

Thus, the question of responsibility for the rise of ISIS requires acknowledging that the group's emergence is due to earlier rounds of failed intervention in Iraq. In addition, ISIS, the Nusra Front and other Sunni insurgency groups all have common roots in the regional Sunni regimes. In order to defeat ISIS and the other groups, the closure of borders to Turkey and Saudi Arabia would be most significant in cutting off the economic and logistical supply routes. Last but not least, one must highlight the fact that the large majority of Sunnis do not support ISIS ideology. In fact, most of the victims of ISIS violence are also Sunnis. In the medium term, the geopolitical significance of ISIS could be in assisting outside powers in efforts to divide Iraq and Syria into smaller "statelets." However, one should acknowledge that this is at present still geopolitical speculation. For the moment, ISIS has been kept safely away from the strategically significant oil fields in the region – other than the Syrian ones.

5. The Crisis Cycle in Syria since 2011

Finally, one needs to explain how the Syrian conflict since 2011 relates to the situation in Iraq. This section will first briefly highlight some features of the Syrian crisis and will then outline the major regional and global geopolitical factors that explain the step-by-step escalation until now. The most important observation is that "media bias in reporting remains a key challenge, plaguing the collection of useful data and misinforming researchers and policymakers regarding the actual events taking place."[48] There has been no conflict since the end of the Cold War that has been subject to such extreme media bias and misrepresentation. One must stress that practically all claims about the current conflict have been issued with an attached political agenda. The western media have been overwhelmingly fed by the "Syrian Observatory for Human Rights," a Coventry (UK)-based virtual organization represented by a single person

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[47] In the same context, Biden stressed that there was no group in Syria that they "could identify as moderate", adding, "by the way, I am serious about that" (ibid.). His statement of the fact that Turkey allowed Sunni insurgents to pass from its territory into Syria triggered a demand by Turkish President Erdogan for him to issue an apology, which was duly offered. In turn, a *New York Times* journalist suggested that Biden "apologized for telling the truth," http://takingnote.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/10/06/joe-biden-apologizes-for-telling-the-truth/?_r=0.

[48] Baliki, Ghassan, "1. Aspects of the Conflict in Syria," *SIPRI Yearbook 2014*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 17.

who is a long-term opponent of the Syrian regime. A large share of "facts" on the Syrian conflict issued in the western media is derived from this single source.[49]

This is no space to highlight more than a few exemplary contested issues. To begin with, the conflict in Syria has from the start in March 2011 been fuelled by arms, funding and logistical assistance from neighbouring countries, with Saudi Arabia and Qatar focusing on the former and Turkey focusing on the latter. The conflict quickly turned into a transnational war in Syria due to the presence of foreign fighters, initially only on the side of the insurgents, and the direct logistical support of invasions into Syria by insurgents from neighbouring countries. After regime change in Libya in 2012, large-scale delivery of weapons from Libyan arms depots to the insurgents – a development that required the extensive involvement of western intelligence agencies – triggered further escalation. In turn, the Syrian government could rely on its existing alliances with Hizbollah, Iran and Russia for support, while the insurgents received their supplies from Sunni states and western sources. Since then, "rebalancing" has kept the conflict going and escalating.[50]

Three points might serve as examples of western media bias in the coverage of the Syrian conflict. First, the western media have continuously downplayed the level of support that the Syrian government enjoyed and continues to enjoy. In 2011 and 2012, when political rallies were still possible, the largest mobilizations in the history of the country took place and hundreds of thousands of citizens expressed their support for the government in all major Syrian cities on numerous occasions. These rallies were underreported in the western media or were explained away as forced mobilizations of Syrian civil servants while much smaller opposition rallies were at the same time claimed to amount to a "revolution." In 2014, Syrian presidential elections took place under conditions of war. Bashar al-Assad faced for the first time in Syria's history two moderate opposition candidates, and the most significant message of this election was the high level of citizens' participation in areas under government control. This was particularly striking when compared with the presidential elections in Egypt under the military regime around the same time in which participation rates were very low. Thus, the coalition that backs up the current Syrian state and that enjoys high degrees of support from all minorities and from Sunnis has so far survived attack from Islamist extremists, who make up the large majority of the foreign-backed insurgency.

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[49]   Even sustained Internet research does not allow the identification of reliable information about "Rami Abdul Rahman", who speaks for the "Observatory", which is in turn only represented by the spokesman. Stories in established news outlets such as BBC, Reuters and *New York Times* draw the picture of a long-term opposition activist who uses the phone to gather information on Syrian events. Never in history has a single citizen-journalist had such an impact on the international media!

[50]   Dostal, Jörg Michael, "Analyzing the domestic and international conflict in Syria: Are there lessons from political science?," *Syrian Studies*, 6, 1, 2014, http://ojs.st-andrews.ac.uk/index.php/syria/article/view/822.

Most Syrians would of course like to see the conflict end as soon as possible and would consider political compromises to achieve this goal. However, the coalition backing the current government cannot realistically engage in negotiations with the "big three" armed extremist groups, i.e., the Islamic State (ISIS), the Nusra Front (the affiliate of Al-Qaida operating in Syria) and Islamic Front.[51] In this situation, the Syrian minorities, notably Christians, must hope that the Syrian government will continue to be able to protect them.

Second, most of the western media treats as fact the assertion that the Syrian military has used chemical weapons in the ongoing conflict. However, such assertions have not been proven. There is no conclusive evidence that the Syrian government has ever used chemical weapons. There are, on the other hand, allegations that appear to show that insurgents, particularly the Nusra Front, received and/or produced locally chemical weapons on a small scale and used such weapons on more than one occasion in the hope of triggering a Libyan-style military intervention by the US and other NATO countries in Syria that would break the Assad regime.[52] Once again, there is no conclusive evidence, although the *cui bono* question might suggest this to be much more likely than the former claim. For the time being, one needs to simply stress that conclusive evidence for any of the assertions is not available.

Third, there is underreporting of how extremist insurgents, such as the Nusra Front, enjoy direct logistical support from the Turkish government. In the case of the joint attack of Nusra and Islamic Front on the Syrian-Armenian city of Kessab, located close to the Turkish border, on March 21, 2014, the Turkish border post was opened for the insurgents to enter Syria, which allowed for a surprise attack on a town that consists largely of descendants of survivors of the Armenian Genocide of 1915.[53] The example of the Kessab attack (and it is only one example among many) underlines the fact that the extremist insurgency groups are directly cooperating with the intelligence agencies

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[51]   For an analysis of the current Syrian situation, see the untitled paper by Arslanian, Ferdinand, February 19, 2015, http://media.wix.com/ugd/fb1673_b36489fb04a94dd191e1f0499c1ffe82.pdf.

[52]   See Hersh, Seymour H., "Whose sarin?," *London Review of Books*, December 19, 2013, and "The Red Line and the Rat Line," *London Review of Books*, April 17, 2014. In addition, one must highlight the fact that the Nusra Front captured the only chlorine gas manufacturing plant in Syria. According to the owner of the plant, Mohammad Sabbagh, "[n]o one can know for certain, but if it turns out chlorine gas was used in the [March 19, 2013 Khan al-Asad] attack, then the first possibility is that it was mine. There is no other factory in Syria that can make this gas, and now it is under opposition control." See Baker, Aryn, "Syria's Civil War: The Mystery Behind a Deadly Chemical Attack," *Time*, April 1, 2013. Claims about the use of chlorine gas in fighting in Syria continue to circulate in the media in 2015.

[53]   Ghazanchyan, Siranush, "The Telegraph reveals Turkish role in the attack on Armenian-populated Kessab," April 15, 2014, Public Radio of Armenia, armradio.am. Some Internet videos, issued directly after the attack and likely to be authentic, as they were carried by pro-Syrian government and insurgency websites alike, show the insurgents walking freely from the Turkish to the Syrian border post carrying black flags and other insignia. On June 15, 2014, the Syrian Army retook Kessab and the local population subsequently returned.

of Turkey and other states in the region that aim to remove the Syrian government at all costs.

How can one make sense of the all-out effort to remove Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and how does this campaign relate to the events in Iraq? Once again, it needs to be stressed that the US has been committed to regime change in Damascus for a long time. This was official policy during the presidency of Bush Jr., when efforts were made to isolate Syria in the region, although this policy did not proceed in any linear fashion. Following the 2005 assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, Syria was blamed by US observers – the case remains unsolved – and efforts were made to further put pressure on Syria. At other times, the Syrian regime was invited to participate in regional diplomacy with western countries, such as during failed negotiations about a "Euro-Mediterranean Partnership Agreement" with the European Union.[54] However, one must stress that leading US politicians were always keen to "turn" Syria by replacing its current leadership.[55]

Once again, why Syria? The country currently has limited oil and gas resources and its share of Middle Eastern overall military spending is only around 1 per cent. It cannot be said to constitute any present direct threat to neighbouring countries – other than as a failed state. Without denying the role of Syrian internal conflicts as one of the drivers of events since the start of the crisis in March 2011, one must stress that Syrian domestic politics cannot be explained without focusing on the outside alliances of the domestic actors.

Most importantly, Syria and Iran were during the entire post-colonial period in a conflictual relationship with Iraq. Never before the US occupation of Iraq were the governments in Damascus, Baghdad and Tehran aligned with each other. Since 1980, Syria and the Islamic Republic of Iran had a mutual defence treaty against Saddam Hussein's Iraq, which only highlighted the long-term conflict between Damascus and Baghdad going back to the 1960s. The removal of Saddam, therefore, allowed for the first time in history for the emergence of an alliance between the three governments.

From the US perspective, the consolidation of this triple alliance – recently confirmed in a trilateral meeting of the deputy foreign ministers of Syria, Iraq and Iran in Tehran on April 22, 2015 – would clearly be the worst-case scenario due to at least five factors. First, a three-country alliance would continue to support Shia political movements in Lebanon, such as Hizbollah, and would strengthen the "Axis of Resistance"

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[54] Dostal, Jörg Michael and Zorob, Anja, *Syria and the Euro-Mediterranean Relationship*, Bolder, Col.: Lynne Rienner, 2008.

[55] In this context, the Saban Center at the Brookings Institution might be singled out as a crucial long-term pressure group in favour of regime change in Syria, cf. Byman, Daniel et al., "Saving Syria: Assessing Options for Regime Change," *Middle East Memo 21*, March 15, 2012.

currently consisting of Hizbollah in Lebanon, Syria and Iran by adding Iraq. Second, survival of the current Syrian government would reconfirm the country's long-standing alliance with Russia, the successor state of the Soviet Union, dating back to 1956. Third, the territory of the three states could act as a barrier against oil pipeline projects linking Saudi and Qatari oil and gas sources with Turkey and western markets. Fourth, an alliance between the three states would conversely allow for alternative pipeline projects – out of reach of western or Gulf Arab control – linking Syrian, Iraqi and Iranian oil and gas with the Mediterranean or the Chinese market. Fifth, largely unexplored but apparently significant natural gas deposits on the Syrian coast line (and in its proximity) could be linked with emerging markets in Asia and would provide resources for the future economic rehabilitation of Syria. As discussed above, the geopolitical influence of pipeline projects on Syrian domestic politics goes back as far as the 1949 Syrian coups and has been a permanent feature of Syrian and Middle Eastern politics ever since.

In summary, the issue of who exercises effective geopolitical control of the Middle East once again points back to the Eisenhower Doctrine of gaining and defending US hegemony in the Middle East region.

Conclusion

In a speech delivered in 2007, retired US general Wesley Clark recalled a personal conversation with Paul Wolfowitz, then Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, which is alleged to have taken place at the Pentagon in 1991. Clark holds that Wolfowitz, when asked about his views on the "Desert Storm" military campaign that had just forced Iraqi troops out of Kuwait, replied as follows: "[O]ne thing we did learn (…) we learned that we could use our military in the region, in the Middle East, and the Soviets won't stop us. And we've got about five to ten years to clean up those old Soviet client regimes, Syria, Iran, Iraq, before the next great superpower comes on to challenge us."[56] The point in quoting this conversation is not to claim that it took place as reported.[57] Rather, it clearly *could* have taken place, and these words perfectly fit the Eisenhower Doctrine and, since the 1990s, many similar statements were issued by mainstream US policy-makers with regard to Middle East affairs.

[56] See Wesley Clark's 2007 speech at the Commonwealth Club of California (full reference in footnote 3 above), at 4:17 min., https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TY2DKzastu8.

[57] Indeed, the Islamic Republic of Iran has never been a "Soviet client" during the period that came to a close in 1991.

The thesis advanced in this paper is that the Eisenhower Doctrine of unilateral US control of the Middle East was conceived under another horizon, in 1957, and is both old-fashioned and utopian. Efforts at unilateral control on the part of the US – with the UK occasionally acting as a sidekick – are unlikely to succeed for at least two reasons. First, the Middle East has been, and continues to be, a deeply divided geopolitical theatre. The issue of Palestinian rights and of occupied Syrian lands (the Golan Heights) will not go away even if the US were to "clean up" the regimes that are currently resisting them. There has been virtually no movement on these two issues for many decades. There will always be a powerful line of thought in the Arab world that will react to what is seen as the unprincipled backing, on the part of the US, of policies that are unacceptable to most Arabs. Second, the issue of the emergence of a multipolar world order in the 21st century is not going to go away. Indeed, one might ask whether US strategy in the region is speeding up rather than slowing down the growth in significance of competing powers. There are many interests at stake in the Middle East in the 21st century – and hardly any of them can be addressed in the context of US unilateralism.

As far as the Arab regional level is concerned, one might stress that the price for the policy of "rebalancing" is a never-ending chain of proxy conflicts in which "Sunni states" and "Shia states" are going to waste their potential and resources while strengthening the position of those who want to impose on them from outside. Besides, these concepts are equally dangerous since the underlying conflicts are much more geopolitical than sectarian. They certainly ignore the fact that Sunnis, Shias and many other groups have lived in harmony in most Arab societies most of the time. Today, it might sound naïve to ask why there is no Arab superpower in the 21st century. Until the 1980s, Arab public opinion expected a much larger role for Arab voices in international affairs. This never materialised, however. In addition, it is important to recall that divisions amongst the Arabs have in the past in the overwhelming number of cases been settled by restoring the status quo. Indeed, one might interpret the failure of the so-called "Arab Spring," as underlined in the maintenance or restoration of authoritarian regimes almost everywhere in the region, as another example of the existence of some underlying balance of forces that tends to be reinforcing.

Finally, when looking at Syria and Iraq, the crisis in the two countries is currently often cited as evidence for an alleged end of the "Sykes-Picot system" of 1916 and the breakdown of "artificial" border lines. This reasoning is, however, unlikely to carry the day. In fact, all border lines in the Middle East are artificial in many respects. Destroying Syria or Iraq as unified states is certainly not a recipe for future regional stability and would only produce new rounds of conflict. The US calculation that removal of the Syrian regime, in line with the Iraqi example, would constitute a way to win – in addition to sending messages to Russia and other powers – appears too risky to be sustainable. It also encourages the regional allies of the US, Saudi Arabia comes to mind, to engage in provocations that further escalate the situation.

In the end, the reasonable argument in favour of a multipolar world order is that it would potentially allow searching for agreements at the international, regional and local level to end the proxy wars and to deal with the underlying conflicts in ways that are less destructive than has so far been the case in the 21st century.

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German Fighters and Their Impact on Domestic Security

Henner Fürtig

Figures vary but the German security authorities calculate the number of Muslims living in Germany as between 3.8 and 4.3 million.[1] According to the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (FOPC) about one percent of them are organized in a total of 30 Islamist groups and movements. Yet, the one percent figure is only helpful as a rule of thumb; it must be added here that the number is rising steadily in absolute terms. Whereas the FOPC counted 42,550 Islamists in 2012, the figure was already 43,185 in 2013. Although not all of these roughly 43,000 people favour the use of violence to achieve their political goals, their democratic reliability is doubtful at the least; as such, they are still a minority among the entire Muslim population but a substantial minority. Another approximately ten percent of these Islamists constitute the nucleus of radical and violent Jihadists. Their numbers grew even faster than those of the Islamists in general. The FOPC puts the number of Jihadists at 3,800 in 2011, at 4,500 in 2012 and at 5,500 in 2013.[2] Another ten percent of those more than 5,000 persons account for the group of so-called "risk persons", i.e., persons that are most likely to plan terrorist attacks. In addition, about 100 out of the 3,000 mosques in Germany are considered "conspicuous".[3]

As mentioned above, the overwhelming majority of Islamists living in Germany is organized in groups like the "Islamic Society of Milli Görüs", or offshoots of the Muslim Brotherhood that repeatedly renounced violence. Other organizations such as Hamas or Hezbollah may be more radical but their preferred area of activities is located in the Middle East. For them, Germany is primarily a "save haven". Nevertheless, the question of whether the segregate existence of those groups within the wider community and their exclusive ideology favour the emergence of radical and violent strands within their membership is still under research. This applies also for the rapidly growing

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[1] See Pfahl-Traughuber, Armin (ed.): *Jahrbuch für Extremismus und Terrorismusforschung 2012 (II)*, Brühl: Fachschule des Bundes für öffentliche Verwaltung 2012, p. 46.

[2] See Kern, Soeren: "Holy War Arrives in Germany". http://gatestoneinstitute.org/4590/germany-jihad (accessed: 23.4.2015).

[3] See Hirschmann, Kai: "Fanatiker in unserer Mitte: Das Phänomen der 'Homegrown Jihadists'", in: KAS Auslandsinformationen Nr. 8, 2010, p. 31.

Salafist movement in Germany. Although we find quietist and moderate strands among them too, its radical, "Jihadist" component is the one that grows particularly fast.

1. THE HISTORY OF GERMAN JIHADIST ACTIVITIES

In the first few years after the attacks of September 11, 2001 (9/11) Germany was not on the priority list of international Jihadism. Thus, German politicians and the public got the impression that they might be spared terrorist attacks such as the ones in Madrid in 2004 and in London in 2005. In addition, some security experts also believed that Muslims living in Germany were not as prone to "Jihad-style" radicalization because they are mainly Turks and Kurds who regularly do not show any sympathy for the Arab al-Qaida and its offshoots. This assessment could not hold up for two reasons. First, it did not take into consideration the fact that significant numbers of German fighters had already taken part in the civil war in Bosnia and – in smaller numbers – in Chechnya long before 9/11.[4] It was extremely difficult to assess how many of them had returned to Germany and which of them would most likely plan terrorist attacks in and against their home country. Second, since 2006, a growing number of young Muslims in Germany had begun to travel to Pakistan to become members of Jihadist organizations. In addition to that, the presence of German troops in Afghanistan instigated ideas within the leaderships of al-Qaida and other terrorist groups to use those German Muslim terrorist recruits to try to force a withdrawal by attacking targets in Germany. The concept became known as "Europlot". Fortunately, most of the returnees were arrested and put into jail.[5] Nevertheless, it might be helpful to mention at least the most important ones of these early German Jihadists.

The "Sauerland Four"

The so-called "Sauerland Four" group was formed by four German Jihadists (Fritz Gelowicz, Adem Yilmaz, Daniel Schneider, Attila Selek) who travelled to North Waziristan in Pakistan and joined the Uzbek Islamic Jihad Union (UIJU). According to the US State Department, the UIJU was responsible for coordinated bombings outside the US and Israeli embassies in July 2004 in Tashkent, the Uzbek capital. It happened more or less by coincidence that the four joined the UIJU. As the two leaders of the group, Gelowicz and Yilmaz, later explained, they had originally planned to go and fight in Chechnya, but were unable to travel to the Caucasus via Turkey. Yilmaz then established contact with Azeri Jihadists, who organized military training in Pakistan

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[4] See Taarnby, Michael: "Understanding Recruitment of Islamist Terrorists in Europe", in: Ranstrop, Magnus (ed.): *Mapping Terrorism Research. State of the Art, Gaps and Future Direction*. Abingdon: Routledge 2007, p. 181.

[5] See Steinberg, Guido: "The Jihadist Threat in Germany", in: per Concordiam. Journal of European Security and Defense Issues, 4 (2013) 1, p. 20.

for them. Although they mainly wanted to fight US forces in Afghanistan, the UIJU leadership asked them to perpetrate attacks in Germany with the goal of forcing German troops from Afghanistan.[6]

Back in Germany, the cell stockpiled 1,600 pounds of highly concentrated hydrogen peroxide, purchased from a chemical supplier, and could have mixed it with other substances to make explosives equivalent to 1,200 pounds of dynamite. But German authorities – acting partly on US intelligence – had been watching them and covertly replaced the hydrogen peroxide with a diluted substitute that could not be used to produce a bomb. After months of observation, German authorities arrested Gelowicz, Schneider and Yilmaz at a rented cottage in the Sauerland district of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) on September 4, 2007. Turkey picked up Selek in November 2007 and later extradited him to Germany.

During the trial the four men confessed that they had plotted bombing attacks against American citizens and facilities, including the US Air Force's Ramstein base. According to their own explanations, the goal was not only to attack Americans in general and the Ramstein base in particular but also to influence a German parliamentary vote in October 2007 on extending the country's military deployment in Afghanistan.

The arrests foiled the Sauerland plot, but the four had already recruited a small group of friends to go to Waziristan. From 2007 onwards, dozens of volunteers travelled the now well-established route via Istanbul, Turkey; the Iranian cities of Tehran, Mashhad and Zahedan; and the Pakistani cities of Quetta and Bannu; to the region of Waziristan, where they joined the UIJU and later other organizations. Eventually, Germans formed the largest national group among Westerners in the Jihadist training camps in Pakistan in 2009 and 2010.[7]

The German Taliban Mujahedeen

Eric Breininger, a young German convert, became a well-known person in the UIJU's public relations campaign and featured prominently on propaganda videos. He successfully called on German sympathizers to join the Jihadists in Waziristan. Of the more than 220 Jihadist recruits who went from Germany to Pakistan after 2001, nearly 40 left in 2009. This influx led to the emergence of a distinctly German subculture in Waziristan, and in September 2009 to the foundation of the German Taliban Mujahedeen (GTM) – the first exclusively German Jihadist group. Its founder and leader, the German-Turk Ahmet Manavbasi, had been a drug dealer who had been extradited from Germany to Turkey in 2000.[8]

The GTM made headline news in Germany in 2009, when they ran a video in which the main speaker criticized German policies while pictures of German landmarks,

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[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid., p. 21.

[8] Ibid., p. 22.

such as the bank skyline in Frankfurt or the Brandenburg Gate, were shown. German media and indeed German police and intelligence at the time actually took this as a direct threat of attacks against Germany. However, it is doubtful whether the GTM would really have the capability to conduct attacks in Germany. It seems as if the GTM was able to create fear disproportionate to their operational capabilities several times, without however having been able to back this up by action. In addition, GTM have also always had the problem that would-be members have often been on the radar of German security agencies even before they went to Pakistan. Quite a number of them already had thick files with German domestic intelligence back home when they became visible in Pakistan. They were mainly monitored from the Kabul offices of the German foreign intelligence service ("Bundesnachrichtendienst" - BND) and the FOPC in Berlin. Furthermore, their prominence made the GTM vulnerable at the same time. They were confronted with intensified drone strikes and other measures. In April 2010, both Manavbasi and Breininger were killed by the Pakistani army. Without their two most prominent "faces", the German Taliban Mujahedeen quickly fell apart. Some of the members joined al-Qaida, which quickly sent them back to Germany as part of the "Europlot".[9]

In May 2010, German and Austrian authorities arrested the Austrian citizen Maqsood Lodin and the German citizen Yusuf Ocak, both returnees from Pakistan. In April 2011, German police arrested the so-called Düsseldorf cell led by Moroccan Abdeladim el-Kebir, another al-Qaida operative from Waziristan. During the two trials – Lodin and Ocak in Berlin and Kebir in Düsseldorf – further information came up about the strategic considerations of al-Qaida to send the German recruits back home. Lodin had carried an USB-drive that contained strategic materials, most importantly an internal al-Qaida document called "future work" that laid out the organization's strategies. By perpetrating more small-scale attacks worldwide, the document argued, al-Qaida would regain some freedom of action and the level of strength to successfully perpetrate attacks on the scale of September 11, 2001. It became clear, in June 2011, that this paper was more than an internal discussion when al-Qaida released a video in which a strategic vision of "individual Jihad" or "lone wolf" attacks was presented. According to this vision, a Jihadist could become a "lone wolf" without necessarily having been involved in the organization before. This was a major step for al-Qaida, which had always insisted on exerting as much central command and control as possible during operations.[10]

"Individual Jihad" and "Homegrown Terrorism"

The "individual Jihad" or "lone wolf" concept was, of course, a confession of al-Qaida's weakness. Since 2008, no major al-Qaida-instigated terror attack has been reported. At

[9]   Ibid., p. 23.

[10]   Ibid.

the same time, the electronic media, especially the Internet, became much more important; the potential terrorist finds on the Internet every aspect of what he or she needs for successful terrorist activities: from the ideological-strategic lecture up to instructions for the construction of bombs.

On the other hand, those Jihadists who operated without instructions from an organization in the background proved unable in the beginning to "create" the number of casualties or the degree of destruction that was sufficient to win the desired public attention. However, the attack of Arid Uka, who shot two American soldiers on 2 March 2011 at the Frankfurt airport, was a first warning sign insofar as Uka radicalized himself exclusively via the Internet and had no physical contact with known Jihadists. Thus he became an early and well-known representative of the "individual Jihad" concept. Hence, it became clear very soon afterwards that he was only one of several cases in which the Internet played a crucial role in the radicalization process. All these would-be or real terrorists have in common that they are members of the Muslim diaspora in the US and in Europe. The "individual Jihad" is a significant feature of the West and not so much of the Arab world, the origin of al-Qaida.

These findings lead us to another field, the phenomenon of the so-called "homegrown terrorism". Although both are overlapping and have lots of similarities, the "individual Jihad" concept should not be mistaken for "homegrown terrorism", which is much broader and older. "Homegrown terrorists" were called fanatics who were born and/or socialized in Western countries. Therefore, the notion applies to people with an immigration background as well as to converts. The concept first appeared in 1999 in the Western media and has been used since 2005 to denominate domestic culprits with a radical, Islamist background as a new variation of the Jihad terrorism. Prior to this, Islamist terrorist attacks in Western countries were mainly carried out by people who had entered their host countries from abroad, although this does not mean that they did not then spend months or even years (as students) there. The "Hamburg group" around Mohammed Atta, Marwan al-Shehhi and Ziad Jarrah, the pilots of 9/11, falls in this category. The new development after 2008 is characterized by a certain "merger" between "homegrown terrorism" and "individual Jihad", when a growing number of second- or third-generation migrants and/or converts respectively became "individual Jihadists". Even if these Jihadists were not directly led by al-Qaida and its many off-shoots, the organization nevertheless continued to act as a source of encouragement and self-legitimisation. However, the Arab Spring and the death or arrest of most of the al-Qaida leadership between 2010 and 2012, made this function more or less obsolete. Of the more than 220 Germans who trained with al-Qaida or al-Qaida-affiliated terrorist organizations from 2001 onwards, more than 110 have returned to Germany and only a

fraction are in jail or on trial.[11] The rest re-orientated itself after the decline of al-Qaida by becoming the catalysts of the growing Salafist subculture in Germany.

2. Salafism in Germany and the Impact of the "Islamic State" (IS)

Covering both its political and Jihadist branch, a Salafist scene has emerged in Germany since 2005/2006, and is increasingly visible and acting more and more self-confidently. This scene does not only seek to distance itself from the German society, but has also declared the Federal Republic of Germany the main enemy of Muslims, primarily due to the presence of German troops in Afghanistan. More frequently than before, the scene expresses its ideas and concerns at public demonstrations. The Salafists reject the German state and its government as such and see themselves as strangers (*ghuraba*) in a predominantly non-Muslim society that persecutes them for their faith. In fact, many Salafists see themselves as victims of a government campaign against their religion. They differ from their surrounding by their dress, their own codes of practice and a difficult-to-understand language, in which they often mix youth slang with Arabic words such as *din* (religion), *dua* (prayer) or *shahada* (martyrdom/creed). At the same time they make extensive use of the Internet to recruit new followers in mosques and on the road. The Salafists believe that they have a missionary task (*dawa*) to spread the true religion (*ad-din al-haqq*).[12] The last few years revealed the increasingly aggressive attitude of many Salafists in Germany.

For various reasons, the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) became a focus of Salafist activities. According to the FOPC, the number of Salafists in NRW amounts to 1,800[13]; out of a total of 5,500. Salafists demonstrated in the spring of 2012 against the actions of the "Pro NRW" – a party that protested, among other things, against the erection of more mosques in the federal state while publicly showing cartoons of Prophet Muhammad. Some demonstrations led to violent clashes, where many policemen were seriously injured.

At the moment, Salafism is the fastest growing Islamist current in Germany. When the FOPC declared the Salafist movement an individual object of observation in 2011, it estimated the number of its adherents as 3,800. By the end of 2012 the number had risen to 4,500, while at the end of 2013, the number of Salafists in Germany amounted to a total of 5,500.[14] Of course, not all of those 5,500 Salafists are terrorists, but the

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[11] Ibid.

[12] See Prucha, Nico: "Die Vermittlung arabischer Jihadisten-Ideologie: Zur Rolle deutscher Aktivisten", in: Steinberg, Guido (ed.): *Jihadismus und Internet: Eine deutsche Perspektive*. Berlin: SWP 2012, p. 46.

[13] See http://www.dw.de/could-german-islamic-extremists-strike-at-home? (accessed: 24.3.2015).

[14] *Islamismus/islamistischer Terrorismus*, FOPC Annual Report 2013, Berlin: Federal Ministry of the Interior 2013, p. 199.

ever-deepening Jihadist discourse among them increases the danger of radicalizing a significant part of them. The danger also became serious because of the fact that the mentioned group of al-Qaida returnees has been supplemented and strengthened in recent times by a growing number of German volunteers fighting side-by-side with the militias of the so-called "Islamic State" (IS) in northern Syria and Iraq.

As early as in December 2013, the "International Centre for the Study of Radicalization and Political Violence" (ICSR) estimated that up to 11,000 fighters from 74 nations had gone to these areas to support the IS, a greater number than in "every other instance of foreign fighter mobilization since the Afghanistan war in the 1980s."[15] While the majority of these fighters were thought to have their origin in the Middle East, a significant minority – up to 2,800 – are European or Western.[16] Fighters from the UK ranked first in the composition of these 2,800 Westerners with a share of 17.9 percent while the Germans "earned" a solid third place with 11.1 percent after France with a share of 11.6 percent.[17] In absolute figures, the 11.1 percent of 2013 amounted to 400 fighters by August 2014[18] and almost 600 by the end of 2014.[19] According to various media reports, German IS-fighters have created their own brigade within the IS forces, reminiscent of the "German Taliban Mujahedeen".[20] Around 60 German IS-fighters had been killed by the end of 2014, with Philip Bergner from Dinslaken in NRW becoming one of the most "prominent" of this group of people when he drove a vehicle packed with explosives into a Kurdish military post in Northern Iraq in August 2014, killing at least 20 people.[21]

By the end of 2014, security authorities had collected and analyzed data on 378 cases out of the estimated 600 German IS-fighters and produced a study that summarized their findings.[22] According to the study, almost 90 percent of the German volunteers have an immigration background and the rest are converts. Yet, these figures alone do not fully describe the problem. Immigration background or not, almost 80 percent of the volunteers hold a German passport. And as German citizens they only need a German identity card to travel to Turkey from where they can easily continue their journey to the "Islamic State". This loophole is apparently not able to be closed since

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[15] Zelin, Aaron Y., "Up to 11,000 foreign fighters in Syria; steep rise among Western Europeans", in: *ICSR Insight*, 17 December 2013.

[16] See Carter, Joseph A., Maher, Shiraz and Peter R. Neumann, Greenbirds: "Measuring Importance and Influence in Syrian Foreign Fighter Networks", London: ICSR 2014, p. 7.

[17] Ibid., p. 11.

[18] See Denis Cuspert – eine jihadistische Karriere, Berlin: Senatsverwaltung für Inneres und Sport 2014, p. 5.

[19] Die Welt, 15 January 2015.

[20] Ibid, 15 June 2014.

[21] Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 15 October 2014.

[22] Analysis by German security authorities of current information on background and radicalization processes of those persons who have left Germany to Syria out of Islamist motivation. Berlin, December 12, 2014.

German law prohibits anyone from confiscating a citizen's identity card. Thus, a travel ban cannot be effective.

Not surprisingly, the majority of the fighters are men (90 percent), whose average age is 26.5 years. About 50 percent of them are married, and 104 persons have children.[23] A specific concern of the German authorities stems from the fact that two-thirds of the fighters are younger than the average of 26.5 years old; 15 percent are even younger than 20, including a growing number of underage persons.[24] FOPC president Maaßen declared in July 2014, that at least 24 underage persons had left Germany for Syria; the youngest of them not older than 13. The mentioned study contains a number of other interesting facts. It notes for instance that the educational level of the sample group is significantly lower than that of the average population. 249 of the analyzed 378 persons had committed crimes before leaving the country. Before becoming Islamists, they were mostly indicted for violent acts and offences against property. Last but not least, they were almost entirely adherents of the Salafist brand of Islam.[25]

In the mentioned statement from July 2014, FOPC president Maaßen also declared that more than 100 out of the then-known number of 400 German IS-fighters had returned to their home country in the meantime.[26] Thus, it is not only the ability of the IS to attract foreign fighters that concerns the German government but also its obvious appeal to certain radical trends in general that might bolster domestic radicalization and increase terrorist threats; if one adds the current number of returnees to the number of al-Qaida returnees since 2005, it is realistic to estimate up to 300 IS and al-Qaida "veterans" among the 500 probable terrorist "risk persons" in Germany. And although Germany is not taking part in air raids against IS forces in Iraq and Syria, it is nevertheless providing military equipment to the Kurdish Peshmerga in Northern Iraq. This might create enough "reason" for IS-returnees to "punish" the German government by terrorist attacks.

3. Recruitment Strategies

The retreat into a radical political and religious world of absoluteness and security develops a certain attraction, especially among people who are looking for something that they think is not so easily discovered in their society. This alternative approach has seemingly the potential to overcome the feeling of isolation and to create its own social basis. Although the biographies of Islamists vary largely, they have all – according to all major analyzes so far – in common the fact that they care less about religion or

[23] Ibid, pp. 8-11.

[24] See Islamismus/islamistischer Terrorismus, … (FN 14) p. 197.

[25] Analysis by German security authorities… (FN 22), pp. 11-13.

[26] See http://www.heute.de/terrormiliz-is-rekrutiert-auch-kinder-in-deutschland-35071414.html?

spirituality than about the status that being part of such an "elitist" group gives them.[27] Thus, they look primarily for recognition, appreciation and a form of social security that they think the society cannot provide. Therefore, they strive for alternative concepts of life. Against this background, the Jihadists became more and more successful in recent years by inserting certain key concepts and terms of their ideology into the German scene of sympathizers.

German security authorities identified relatively early certain "hotspots" of recruitment. In the 1990s, the so-called "Multicultural House" in Neu-Ulm in southern Germany was the most active institution for the recruitment of fighters for Bosnia and Chechnya. One of the most prominent members of the "House", Reda Sayam, later moved to Berlin but remained loyal to the cause by recruiting and trafficking volunteers to the IS in Syria. In 2013, he went to Syria himself and reportedly served as a "minister of education" in the "Caliphate" until he was killed in an air strike in December 2014.[28] In the first decade of the 21st century, the "Global Islamic Media Front" (GIMF) took over the role that the "Multicultural House" had played in the 1990s. The Austrian citizen Mohamed Mahmoud became the best-known "face" of the GIMF. He was convicted and imprisoned in 2007 for his activities but was released in 2011, only to immediately found an organization called "Millatu Ibrahim" (Abraham's Religion), which became the main platform for German foreign fighter activities in the IS territory.[29]

It goes without saying that the increasing popularity of the Internet and especially the new social media has strengthened "Millatu Ibrahim" considerably. In particular, the YouTube video platform proved to be a useful tool for representing difficult content in an attractive form. Mohamed Mahmoud became a star of the German scene; he spoke authoritatively about religious and ideological issues. Mahmoud's prominence has not suffered significantly from his departure to Egypt after "Millatu Ibrahim" was prohibited in 2012; he was able to maintain his high visibility on the Internet.

The same applies to Denis Cuspert, another prominent member of "Millatu Ibrahim" who disappeared in June 2012 and showed up at the side of his companion in Egypt. The FOPC has an entire dossier on Cuspert because it hopes to comprehend – by examining his biography – how a former "Gangsta" rapper, performing under the name "Deso Dogg", became a Jihadist who committed horrible acts of violence while fighting for the IS in Syria. Cuspert included elements of the modern pop culture in the Jihadist discourse. The combination of a militant ideology with forms of distribution appealing to young people made the Jihadism "cool" and thus successful in the battle for new sympathizers and supporters. In April 2014, Cuspert joined the IS; the video documenting his oath of loyalty to Abu Bakr al Baghdadi became extremely popular in

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[27] See http://www.dw.de/could-german-islamic-extremists-strike-at-home, (FN 13).

[28] Die Welt, 16 December 2014.

[29] Steinberg, Guido: *Al-Qaidas deutsche Kämpfer: Die Globalisierung des islamischen Terrorismus*. Hamburg: Körber-Stiftung 2014, p. 361.

the German Jihadist scene. Since then, he has even increased his propaganda activities, starring in several Internet videos; once, for instance, posing with mutilated bodies of anti-IS fighters.[30] It is rumoured that he himself is a leading protagonist of these efforts, for instance, via the IS media service "al-Hayat". "Al-Hayat" and "al-Gharb", another media outlet, have produced some of their publications in German; German articles were also printed in the first issue of the IS magazine "Dabiq".

Cuspert's career at the IS also illustrates another interesting development. On the one hand, the Jihadist Internet has changed a lot in recent years. It has never been as easy, since 2008, to access all types of Jihadist propaganda via the network and network-based new social media. Specifically, the audio-visual propaganda of Jihadists has become widespread. On the other hand, however, the newly produced material lost quality. Increasingly, it was the sympathizers and supporters who spoke up and not the terrorist groups themselves. And this changed significantly with the emergence of the IS and its international supporters. An ICSR study came to the conclusion that the battle in Iraq and Syria may have become the first conflict "in which a large number of Western fighters have been documenting their involvement in conflict in real-time, and where – in turn – social media represents an essential source of information and inspiration to them. In the minds of the foreign fighters, social media is no longer virtual: it has become an essential facet of what happens on the ground."[31]

Yet, on the other hand, one should be careful not to "demonize" the Internet. The previously mentioned study that collected and analyzed data on 378 cases out of the estimated 600 German IS-fighters came to the conclusion that the Internet was the sole impetus of radicalization in only 13 cases. The study, on the contrary, indicated that social contacts were still a major factor leading individuals onto the path of radicalization. For only 3 percent of the analyzed people, offline social contacts played no role in the radicalization process.[32] Another important result of the study was the finding that the average duration of the radicalization process had fallen from 3.3 years to 1.2 years after the war in Syria started;[33] the Internet had no obvious impact on the speed of the process. More importantly, a significant proportion of the interviewed people openly stated that their main motivation to go to Syria was to fight.[34] Dozens of them have returned to Germany in the meantime. The German authorities would be well advised to always remember these findings of the study.

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[30] See http://www.liveleak.com/view?i=108_1415124887 (accessed: 23.4.2015).

[31] Carter…, (FN 16), p. 1.

[32] Analysis by German security authorities… (FN 22), pp. 13-16.

[33] Ibid., pp. 17-18.

[34] Ibid., pp. 18-19.

4. Reactions of the Government

The strategy of the government to address the Jihadist danger has three main components. The first one can be described as *counter-radicalization efforts* in the broadest sense. Honest and law-abiding Muslims, even legalistic Islamists, should be integrated into these efforts. In 2005, the FOPC and other security authorities started a dialogue with the main Islamic organizations in Germany, for instance the "Central Council of the Muslims in Germany" (CCMG) and the "Turkish-Islamic Union of the Institution of Religion" (DITIP). Four years later, the government initiated the so-called "Islam Dialogue", an institution to discuss and negotiate matters of integration regularly and on the highest and widest possible level. But unfortunately, there is no central Muslim contact organization in Germany; on the contrary, the many associations and groups are deeply at odds with each other. Therefore, the government had to diversify its arsenal in its dealings with the Muslim population.

In general, it tries to establish and to spread a counter-narrative to the Jihadist ideology with the help of non-governmental organizations, including the official Islamic associations, moderate Islamic scholars, Arab intellectuals and even "icons" of the "Arab Spring" and the so-called Pop-Islam. Not the least of which is that it should be made easy to obtain information on Islam and Muslims in a Western society that corrects the Jihadist picture of the West. Additionally, the establishing of chairs and institutes to teach Islamic theology at four German universities in order to educate highly cultured Imams for mosques and houses of prayer in Germany became another substantial effort of the counter-radicalization component.

The second component comprises *measures under administrative law.* The law may allow banning organizations and persons that the authorities consider to be a threat to security; and – even more directly – they can be used to prevent attempts to leave the country to join the IS. Thomas de Maiziere, Germany's Interior Minister, became vocal in this regard about the need to change the Schengen Agreement in order to stop returnee Jihadists from crossing borders within the EU undetected.[35] Another main part of this component is, of course, the monitoring of the Internet and other electronic media. Although the "triumphal procession" of the Internet and electronic media in the Jihadist scene of Germany facilitated the struggle against extremism insofar as non-virtual contacts between the extremists became just one way to organize, i.e., the institutional cohesion became weaker, the sheer number and dispersal of Jihadist Internet activists made it almost impossible to control them.

Therefore, demands for new laws and tougher legal action against the propagandists of Jihad became louder. Hence the Attorney General called for much more stringent prosecution of Jihadist Internet propaganda after the attack at the Frankfurt

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[35] See Dore, Giovanna Maria Dora: "A Security Threat at Europe's Doorstep", *The American Interest*, 15 December 2014.

German Fighters and Their Impact on Domestic Security

Airport in 2011. But even US politicians who support a total ban on all Jihadist materials on the Internet are aware that this is not feasible, especially in the US, because it would violate the fundamental right of freedom of expression. And in Germany too, such a general censorship would violate the Basic Law; and not to forget, numerous websites are connected to servers in other states, thus evading German law. A general ban on all Jihadist and especially Salafist texts, including those that do not directly call for violence, would furthermore reinforce the opinion of Salafists and Jihadists that the Western freedom of expression ends when it comes to Islam.

According to the FOPC and other security institutions, Germany has already enough legal means at hand to combat propaganda and propagandists of the "Internet Jihad". In the case of web-based calls for criminal or terrorist acts, the identification of concrete targets of attack or the presentation of manuals for the construction of bombs and other weapons, the legal situation is clear based on the "Law for the Prosecution of the preparation of severe seditious acts of violence" (GVVG) of 2009. In addition to this, the legal instruments to prosecute the support of terrorist organizations both in Germany and abroad, sedition, defamation of religions and religious communities or violations of the protection of minors are sufficient to prosecute the propagandists of Jihad, to condemn them and to thus discourage potential imitators. In the spirit of this law, the district court of Reutlingen condemned a 27-year-old man in January 2011 for sedition; he had posted relatively harmless Internet texts by international standards.

Although the Internet is, fortunately, still the main "playground" of Jihadists, the German law-enforcing authorities has, of course, also to react in cases of criminal acts in the non-virtual world. Therefore, the third component, *criminal investigation and law enforcement* is not of least importance. The Federal Attorney General, for instance, has indicted four Salafists from North Rhine Westphalia on March 12, 2014 due to a foiled assassination attempt on the president of the "Pro NRW" party. One of them was also charged with the attempted bomb attack on the Bonn Central Station on December 10, 2012. The Bonn District Court confirmed on January 20, 2014 a judgment of six-years imprisonment against a Salafist who had seriously injured two policemen in riots on May 5, 2012 in Bonn. By March 2015, the Federal Attorney General had started investigations against altogether 106 returnees from Syria and Iraq.[36]

Nevertheless, regardless of all these efforts, security circles in Germany came to the pessimistic conclusion that the talk is no longer of whether a terrorist attack of sorts will occur in Germany, but rather when.

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[36] See http://spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/islamischer-staat-ermittlungen (accessed: 17.3.2015).

France after Paris: Domestic Radicalization and Policy Responses

Mansouria Mokhefi

INTRODUCTION

The Syrian conflict has captured the imaginations and inflamed the passions of young Muslims around the world. Since the outburst of the conflict in 2011, never in the history of the modern Muslim world has a conflict drawn so many jihadis, surpassing wars in Bosnia, Afghanistan and Iraq. While the focus for most jihadis was initially to join the fight against the Syrian regime, that goal has shifted to supporting the institution of the caliphate announced in June 2014, and to opposing the US-led coalition, which started its airstrikes in August 2014.

The idea of the caliphate has galvanized extremists worldwide and more than 20,000 volunteers from around the world have already entered Syria, which has become the epicentre of the global jihad. Although most of them come from the Arab world, others are from Western countries, principally from Europe.

European countries have become a breeding ground for jihad and according to Europol, some 5,000 Europeans have already joined ISIS; it estimated that more than 10,000 will have joined by the end of 2015.

France is the Western country from which the most important group of jihadis has joined ISIS. The number of those who have moved to Syria, leaving everything behind, cutting their ties with family and disappearing from their milieu, has been estimated at 1,500 at the beginning of 2015.

Due to its long involvement in the Arab world, its colonial past and its difficulties in integrating its large Muslim population, France has already been hit by Islamic terrorism in the past decades and continues to be a privileged target of radicalized Muslim youth, many of whom were born and raised in France and are now determined to carry out terrorist attacks on French soil. After the January Paris attacks the French government decided to reinforce the state's already robust anti-terrorism legislation and is working at a strong anti-radicalization reform package to address the growing and important mobilization of young Muslims and to prevent more jihadis' departures.

A better evaluation and understanding of the widespread disenfranchisement within the French Muslim community has become a priority in order to develop ad-

equate responses to the serious integration crisis the country has been experiencing for decades.

This paper will offer an analysis of the specific French context of Muslim youth radicalization, concentrating on the reasons why ISIS has been remarkably successful in attracting French jihadis and how its attraction has been amplified by the many social, political and cultural grievances that push young Muslims into radicalization.

The paper will then address the situation following the January Paris attacks in terms of their consequences on security in the country, which has become one of ISIS's most important targets, and in terms of inclusiveness, in order to ease the tensions that the take-it-or-leave-it assimilationist demands have aggravated. It will demonstrate that the Paris attacks have generated new tensions and deepened old frustrations. They have triggered the development of a whole new legislative arsenal aimed at framing the fight against extremism and radicalization. They have also revived the debate about the place of the Muslim population and the role of Islam in the French secular society.

I. The French Context of Muslim Youth Radicalization

1. France's Failure to Integrate its Large Muslim Community

France has experienced large-scale immigration, a constant feature of French society since the 19th century, and is home to one of the highest proportions of immigrant descendants in Europe, with immigrants and their children and grandchildren accounting for around a quarter of the country's population.[1] France is also home to the largest Muslim community in Europe, estimated at between 7 and 9 million out of a population of 66 million.[2]

The majority of Muslim immigrant workers in France came from former French colonies in North and sub-Saharan Africa, where France had long and conflicted relations with the Muslim world and where historic mistreatment of Islam by French authorities left a wounded memory.[3] It is estimated that people of Algerian origin constitute the largest French Muslim population; their number is estimated at between 3 and 4 million. For most of them, the French colonial past, the 132-year occupation of Algeria and the 7-year war of independence still weigh heavily, even 50 years after

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[1] Bouvier, G. "Les descendants d'immigrés plus nombreux que les immigrés: une position française originale en Europe," in *Immigrés et descendants d'immigrés en France* (Insee Références, Paris 2012), www.insee.fr/fr/ffc/docs_ffc/ref/IMMFRA12_b_VE_posfra.pdf.

[2] The collection of public statistics, including information on religious identification, is not allowed in France (article 8 of the 6 January 1978 Law), which makes it difficult to measure the level of diversity in France. Nationality is the only information recorded in the census and available to the administration.

[3] Mohamed Arkoun, (ed.) "*Histoire de l'islam et des musulmans en France du Moyen-Age à nos jours*," Albin Michel Paris, 2006. Bernard Godard, *La Question musulmane en France*, Fayard, 2015.

Algeria became independent.[4] France has had a particularly hard time integrating its Muslim minority, but the complexities and difficulties of integration are more dramatically displayed when it comes to the French of Algerian origin, of which a large proportion lives in the banlieues, the wretched suburbs that surround major French cities. Over the years, the banlieues have become symbols of the general failure of France's integration policies, especially its failure to fully integrate the youth from the second and third generation of French of Algerian origin. Despite France's efforts in the last few years to live up to its democratic values and to try to integrate its Muslims into all sectors of national life, under-representation of French-Algerians in public life, politics, law, media or any other profession, remains very important. Political theorists and immigration specialists have outlined the effects of racial and ethnic discrimination on the second and third generation of French of Algerian origin, still viewed as immigrants rather than citizens, and have examined inequalities in the labour market and in educational attainment that have left most of them feeling discriminated against.[5] Economists have outlined the high poverty rates and rampant unemployment affecting between 30 and 40% of the youth in the rundown banlieues compared with 10% of the population at large and outlined also how such broader economic and social dislocation has led to enormous grievances that keep aggravating the feelings of exclusion and humiliation. The ideals of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, dating back to the French Revolution and still deeply embedded in French life, appear quite distant and empty to many French Muslims who feel they are treated as second class citizens.[6] Feelings of deeply rooted humiliation and long-held rancour have led a growing number of French Muslim youth who cannot identify with their parents' country of origin and who at the same time feel excluded by the country they live in, to embrace Islam as a new self-identification. For many youths Islam is viewed as an identity rather than spirituality, an identity that supersedes any specific ethnic or national identification and which comes as a rebuke to the exclusionary nature of French society. Those most profoundly affected by this identity conflict have turned to Salafism and others, impressed by ISIS's successes in spreading its influence and stretching its tentacles from Iraq and Syria to other Arab countries like Libya, Egypt and Algeria where radical groups have pledged allegiance to Al-Baghdadi, are tempted by the idea of jihadism.

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[4]   Jo McCormack, *Collective Memory: France and the Algerian War*, Lexington Books, 2010. Stora Benjamin, "Algérie: Les retours de la mémoire de la guerre d'indépendance," *Modern & Contemporary France*, Vol. 10, Issue 4, 2002.

[5]   Silberman, R., and I. Fournier. "Second Generations on the Job Market in France: A Persistent Ethnic Penalty," *Revue Française de Sociologie* 49, 2008: 45-94. Jennifer Frette, *Constructing Muslims in France*, Temple University Press, 2014.

[6]   Nabila Ramdani, "French-Algerians are still second-class citizens," *The Guardian*, 11/01/2013, http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/dec/19/french-algerians-still-second-class.

While, by and large, Muslim immigrants have in the past displayed a willingness and capacity to assimilate, their descendants, especially those who consider that France's policies towards its Muslims are unfair, double standard and anti-Islam, have been increasingly rejecting French republican values and immersing themselves in Islam and Salafism.[7] A 2011 report found that that many residents of the banlieues increasingly do not see themselves as French and that a growing number of them do not want to integrate into French society. The report warned that France is on the brink of a major social explosion because of the failure of Muslims to integrate into French society and pointed at the fact that "Islamic values are replacing those of the French Republic" and that Salafi leaders are "promoting the social marginalization of Muslim immigrants in order to create a parallel Muslim society that is ruled by Sharia law."[8]

With the emergence of homegrown terrorism, French authorities are now more than aware that France is particularly vulnerable to jihadism and that the country has become a primary target for Islamic terrorists. When he stated that the Paris terrorist attacks have exposed a "territorial, social, and ethnic apartheid", French Prime Minister Manuel Valls was not only acknowledging that tensions are deeply rooted, but also recognizing that the government should urgently work at building cohesion in those large areas where socio-economic problems, dysfunctional schools and devastated urban environment have contributed to citizens feeling abandoned by their government and to radical salafis taking advantage of the situation. The state seems to have realized that French Muslim citizens remain a significant and growing minority that is part of the French society and that it should demonstrate its ability to re-integrate the suburbs into the national project. Thus, a few weeks after the Paris attacks, the government released a package of reforms aimed at better integrating Muslims into French society. These reforms will deal with the failed organization of the cult and with the deterioration of republican values in schools with a high number of Muslim children in order to foster the emergence of an Islam de France while securing Laïcité.

2. Laïcité and French Muslim Identity

The long and distinctive tradition of French secularism, which dates back to the Revolution, and Laïcité, which was enshrined as a law in 1905, mandating the privatization of religion in order to guarantee its free exercise, have been at the heart of a fierce debate over what it means to be French and whether that definition can make room for France's large Muslim population.

[7] It is estimated that the number of Salafis in France is between 12,000 and 15,000. "Secte ou pas secte? Plongée chez les salafistes de France," *Le Monde*, 30 September 2011, http://religion.blog.lemonde.fr/2011/09/30/secte-ou-pas-secte-plongee-chez-les-salafistes-de-france/. Mohamed-Ali Adraoui, "Radical Milieus and Salafis Movements in France," working paper, European University Institute, 2014, http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/31911/MWP_2014_13.pdf.

[8] Institut Montaigne Report directed by Gilles Kepel, http://www.banlieue-de-la-republique.fr/.

In the past decades, Laïcité, a major and defining principle of the French republic, has come under severe challenge from Islam, which does not easily accept the ban on the public exercise of religion. Although Laïcité promotes egalitarianism and requires keeping religious belief private, it has actually been perceived by French Muslims, who traditionally see little distinction between religion and public life, as a dictatorial regime using all kinds of pretexts for social and cultural exclusion and religious discrimination. Some measures taken by the French government and supported by public opinion, such as the ban first on the headscarf and then on the burqa, have fuelled resentment at what is considered French racism and added distrust toward republican values and laws felt to be imposed on them as part of a totalitarian democracy they reject.

Accusing the French state of perceiving and considering Islam as an archaic and obscurantist phenomenon and of willing to emancipate Muslims from their religion, French radical Islamic preachers and agitators who oppose the secular and republican modernity, portray French Muslims as the victims of an oppressive government and encourage them to fight for the recognition of their religion and to challenge the French society, viewed as materialistic and averse to God.

However, the concept of state secularism has evolved and adapted to the new demographic and religious context in which Islam is officially France's second religion after Christianity and where more and more people born into Muslim families practise their faith[9]. Despite the fact that the 1905 Law prohibits the government from getting "involved in the internal organization of churches," numerous loopholes have always allowed the state to provide funding for religious places, as it did for the Mosque of Paris, established in 1924, and continues to do so for the many other mosques that have been erected in France.

Because it has been argued that official mosques could help counter the extremism sometimes preached by self-styled imams and that they could help foster a more moderate form of Islam while easing the many frustrations and feelings of injustice expressed by the Muslims, some local authorities have found ways to circumvent French laws on secularism – from tax concessions to low-cost land leases – to build mosques[10]. There are two hundred mosques currently under construction in France, and all of them have benefited from funds from the state, which is in addition to funds from the faithful themselves, and other funds coming from abroad as gifts.

Also, even though public officials keep reiterating their commitment to the principle of the church/state separation set by the 1905 Law, the state has been deeply involved

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[9] A 2011 poll found that 41 per cent of people born into Muslim families practised their faith, reflecting a rise from 2007, when the proportion was 33 per cent. "Enquête sur l'implantation et l'évolution de l'Islam de France," IFOP, July 2011, http://www.ifop.com/media/pressdocument/343-1-document_file.pdf.

[10] For Cergy-Pontoise Mosque, which opened in 2012, local authorities granted a lease of the land at very low rent for a term of 99 years and agreed to provide the mosque with a bank guarantee so that it could obtain a €2.5 million loan for construction.

and truly instrumental in institutionalizing an Islamic cult. With the establishment of the French Council of the Muslim Cult (CFCM), France has become a country where Islam enjoys official recognition. However, this instance created by Nicolas Sarkozy[11] in 2003 was, from the onset, criticized for pandering to a "Muslim vote" in view of the 2007 presidential elections and in order to seduce the Muslim electorate, traditionally known for voting for the left. More importantly, the CFCM has been widely criticized for its failure to impose itself as a reliable and credible institution, since it never managed to gather full support among French Muslims or to represent the full diversity of France's Muslims. Thus, still considering that it has a role to play in organizing Muslim representation, the state has been looking at a reform that will establish an institution, which, unlike the CFCM, will be suitable to the diversity of French Muslims and capable of diffusing French republican principles.[12] But the problem that will be faced by any reform will be once again to find a single Muslim authority to negotiate with, one that won't be plagued by rivalries between federations' allegiances to foreign countries, as the Muslim community in France is not only heterogeneous but is still affiliated to foreign countries, such as Algeria or Morocco for instance: both of them have been disputing the leadership over the French Muslims.

Some critics argue that although France pretends to be allergic to communitarianism, viewed as conflicting with French republicanism, French policy makers have in fact encouraged Islamic communitarianism, while at the same time criticizing it.[13] Others denounce the propensity of the secular state to continue defining and treating French citizens of Islamic origin as, first and foremost, "Muslims" and for trying to create "Muslim" solutions, instead of concentrating on socio-economic issues such as employment and education.[14] Moreover, because the French sense of identity is so intertwined with secularism, allowing some adaptations to the 1905 Law and some degree of communitarianism has been criticized by the majority of French non-Muslims, who are deeply attached to Laïcité, brandished as the only allowed "religion"; especially since Muslims suffer from a negative perception as people who cannot integrate republican

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[11] Sarkozy was not the first politician to try organizing Islam. Before him, Pierre Joxe, then Minister of Interior for President Francois Mitterrand, created the CORIF, Council of reflection on Islam in France, in 1990, a project that ultimately failed largely due to the divisions within French Muslim society.

[12] "Can Paris succeed in reforming the 'Islam of France'?" *Middle East Eye*, 18/02/2015.

[13] Geisser, V. and A. Zemouri. *Marianne et Allah: Les politiques Français face à la question Musulmane*, La Découverte, Paris 2007.

[14] Nora Fellag, "The Muslim Label: How French North Africans Have Become 'Muslims' and not 'Citizens'," *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe*, Vol 13, No 4, 2014, 1-25.

values, and Islam is still largely perceived within the French society as a "regressive religion".[15]

On the other side, ISIS has been encouraging law-abiding French Muslims to stop making compromises with French secularism and urging its sympathizers to take action against the French and against those Muslims who identify themselves with them: calls that frighten the French population and increase its fear of Muslims with the risk that "the more Muslims feel suspected, feared or rejected by the non-Muslim majority, the more likely they are to support the extremists."[16]

Meanwhile, French intelligence services are very concerned that mosques in France are being taken over by extremist imams. Right after the wave of Islamic terrorism in the mid-1990s, they developed surveillance systems to keep an eye on suspected radical mosques. That surveillance led to the closing of some dozens of radical and Salafi mosques since 2001 and to the expulsion of around 200 radical imams who were fuelling anti-Western feelings. In spite of surveillance and repression, the number of prayer rooms and mosques that are now run by fundamentalists has more than doubled in four years, going from 44 to 89 between 2010 and 2014.[17] And the inflammatory rhetoric is still encouraging violence against women, stoning, and jihad.[18]

Keen to avoid charges that it is imposing new religious practices, but considering that there is an absolute necessity and urgent need to reshape Muslim theology, the government has been advocating and encouraging the emergence of a generation of imams more fully engaged in the republic and has pledged financial and institutional support to increase the number of imams trained in France as one way to ensure that moderate Islam predominates in the country.[19] It is also trying to develop a greater and more effective cooperation with Muslim civil society, and is supporting Muslim leaders and intellectuals, mostly western-educated, who are exploring new avenues to reconcile Islamic teachings with the needs of modern societies of the 21st century

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[15]   Pew Research Center, http://www.pewglobal.org/files/2008/09/Pew-2008-Pew-Global-Attitudes-Report-3-September.pdf. A more recent survey found that 74% of French citizens view Islam as "intolerant" and "incompatible" with French values: "La religion musulmane fait l'objet d'un profond rejet de la part des Français," *Le Monde*, 24/01/2015, www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2013/01/24/la-religion-musulmane-fait-l-objet-d-un-profond-rejet-de-la-part-des-francais_1821698_3224.html#UbxAZ2AlzjZkzCpS.99.

[16]   Buruma, I. "Charlie and Theo," 15/01/15 http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/charlie-hebdo-essence-of-democracy-by-ian-buruma-2015-01#TxUMspJcJdR5m5y9.99.

[17]   According to a report by intelligence services quoted in French media, there are 25 "radical prayer rooms" in the Ile-de-France region around Paris, 22 in the region around the city of Lyon and 13 around Marseille. "Le Poids de l'Islam en France," *Le Monde*,25/02/2015, http://www.lemonde.fr/les-decodeurs/article/2015/01/21/que-pese-l-islam-en-france_4559859_4355770.html#2P0AKSL5E3ThJsac.99.

[18]   According to the report by intelligence services, in one mosque in Marseille, worshippers were encouraged to "leave the land of the infidels."

[19]   "Former les imams, une 'priorité'," *Le Monde*, 23/04/2014, http://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2014/04/23/former-les-imams-une-priorite-contrariee_4405681_3224.html#9tO28rdsAdz2OmGe.99.

and with French republican values. The French authorities consider that Muslim voices advocating a new and liberal form of Islam hold the key to relieving the tensions between Muslims and non-Muslims and are welcoming any efforts to reform Islam "from within".

Meanwhile the intellectual culture war over the role of Islam in France and the place of Muslims in French society that has been going on for three decades is still bubbling along and the recent publication of books such as Eric Zemmour's *Le Suicide Francais* and Michel Houellebecq's *Soumission* has contributed to further inflaming the debate.

3. French Foreign Policy and Jihadism

France, which has been more closely engaged with the Muslim world and much longer than any other Western country, had been confronted early on with a form of terrorism that was different in nature from internal political and territorial terrorism like Corsican and Basque terrorism.

During the Algerian war of independence in the 1950s and early 1960s, the Algerian FLN (*Front de Libération Nationale*) perpetrated many acts of terrorism on French soil, and the French OAS (*Organisation de l'armée secrète)*, opposing De Gaulle's Algerian policy, moved its terror campaign from Algeria to metropolitan France and was responsible of many attacks. During the 1970s, France experienced many terrorist attacks from left-wing radical groups such as *Action Directe* and in the 1980s was hit by a wave of extremist violence stemming from the situations in Palestine and Iran.[20]

In the 1990s, France became the first Western country to experience a new form of Islamic terrorism with the repercussions on its soil of the Algerian civil war. France was then hit by Algerian politico-religious terrorism and suffered many attacks attributed to extremists of the radical Islamist group GIA (*Groupe Islamique Armé*) whose campaign was to punish France for its support of the Algerian regime.

France was also the first Western country to experience homegrown acts of terrorism: with Khaled Kelkal, a French citizen of Algerian origin, who, in 1995, killed eight people in Paris; and Mohamed Merah, another French citizen of Algerian origin, who, in 2012, shot three soldiers in southern France, and then killed three students and a teacher at a Jewish school in Toulouse.

It has been established that jihadi propaganda has heavily relied on a narrative built upon the condemnation of Western foreign policy and on the idea that Islam was under assault. Such a narrative has also fuelled French radicalization.

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[20]   On May 20, 1978, Palestinian militants were responsible for the attack at Paris Orly airport targeting passengers on a flight to Tel Aviv; and on October 3, 1980, others were responsible for the attack on a Paris synagogue. In 1985-86, pro-Iranian militants were responsible of two attacks that killed a total of 13 people and wounded 303.

French foreign policy has been under heavy criticism for its colonial past and its post- colonial full-fledged support to Arab authoritarian regimes and is considered as co-responsible for the Western atrocities committed in Muslim countries.

Although the majority of France's Muslim population is not involved in national politics, French foreign policy in the Muslim world has a major resonance within French Muslims who identify themselves with their Muslim brothers in Palestine, Afghanistan and Iraq.

France may not be involved in all Western wars in the Muslim world, but its military interventions in Afghanistan, Libya, Mali and Iraq[21] have been fuelling a lot of criticism among French Muslims. France's decision to align itself with the US-led coalition against ISIS has provided them with further evidence that there is, with French complicity, an ongoing Western-led onslaught against Islam.

The French anti-terrorism campaigns and wars in North Africa and the Middle East have made France a priority target for ISIS, whose terrorists have publicly threatened to "punish" it, and also to punish its citizens for letting their government conduct hostile policies against Islam. ISIS has been encouraging French Muslims to perpetrate acts of vengeance on French soil; however there is no evidence that the terrorists who struck Paris in January were affiliated to ISIS. They nevertheless justified their massacres by accusing France of assaulting their religion and of killing Muslims in many Arab countries[22]. The events, policies and wars in the Islamic world have seriously affected France and continue to do so and critics have already argued that the January Paris attacks were "the result of France's foreign policy over the past few years".[23] French foreign policy, as extremists perceive it, is therefore an important factor of the strong jihadi mobilization and should be taken into account when countering radicalisation. And yet, not all de-radicalisation analyses or programmes seem to be taking into account the importance of this factor.

4. Who are the French Jihadis?

Jihad seems to have hit France harder than other Western countries: more than 1,500 young people have already left for Syria while many others are considering joining the caliphate. The number leaving France to join the fight against the Syrian regime swelled

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[21] France contributed about 4,000 troops to NATO's 13-year mission in Afghanistan and a similar number, backed by tanks, helicopters and attack jets, were deployed in 2012 to Mali when it was in danger of being overrun by jihadis. That mission has now expanded to cover Niger and Chad. The French air force was the first to join the US-led effort against the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq, dispatching 15 Mirage and Rafale fighter-bombers to conduct bombing raids. French advisers are helping to train Iraqi government forces. The French navy has also joined the campaign and has sent the *Charles de Gaulle* aircraft carrier with its 30 attack jets to support the coalition's efforts.

[22] Both the Kouachis brothers and Coulibaly made such statements to the French media over the phone while holding hostages.

[23] Cecile Tabou, "Les effets de plusieurs années de politique étrangère," *Témoignages*, 10/01/2015, http://www.temoignages.re/politique/actualites/un-nouveau-front-de-la-guerre-s-est-ouvert-en-france,81126.html.

in 2013, and the movement has dramatically increased after Al Baghdadi proclaimed the caliphate in June 2014. Unlike Afghanistan, which became the first contemporary land of jihad after the Soviet invasion in the late 1970s, Syria is a closer destination for European jihadis. Moreover it is an easy one: French nationals do not need a visa to enter Turkey, from where they cross the border to neighbouring Syria.[24]

The typical French candidate is a male or female between 18 and 29 years old, although there are many exceptions – some are minors between 15 and 17 years old; others are well over 30. Beyond age and gender, there are few consistent patterns and no reliable profile of who can become a jihadi[25] but it appears that Islamist radicalization has been filling a considerable ideological void, one left by the increasingly contested traditional Islam that has been surpassed by Salafism, which has become the sole religious reference for many French young Muslims.

Theories concerning the root causes of jihadism have tended to focus principally on either sociological or ideological causes. Actually there is no single determining factor but rather a multiplicity of them, a combination of social and economic grievances and of political reasons such as the fight against Bashar Al Assad or a general commitment to redress local and regional grievances in the Muslim world.[26]

The idea of the caliphate preys on impressionable minds and sensitive teenagers for whom it feeds a promise of a common destiny and a feeling of belonging and creates a desire to escape into a new identity and settle in a Muslim land.

While some are disillusioned teenagers trying to find purpose, or just die as martyrs, others are motivated by the desire for adventure: "The Islamic State promises its recruits adventure and intense engagement with an exciting new venture. There are no competing voices offering anything comparable."[27] The financial aspect should not be underestimated, since money has always been a big motivator in driving foreign fighters to join foreign wars. With ISIS, the privileges – housing and material – afforded to the foreigners have been documented as well as the good salary: foreign fighters "earn

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[24] Turkey has been trying to tighten its border but jihadis can still find their ways.

[25] According to John Horgan, director of the Center for Terrorism and Security Studies at the University of Massachusetts Lowell, "[f]our decades of psychological research on who becomes a terrorist and why hasn't yet produced any profile." Stern, J. and Berger, JM. "ISIS and the Foreign-Fighter Phenomenon", *The Atlantic*, 8/03/15, http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/03/isis-and-the-foreign-fighter-problem/387166.

[26] Daniel Byman and Jeremy Shapiro, "Be Afraid. Be A Little Afraid: The Threat of Terrorism from Western Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq", *Foreign Policy at Brookings*, Policy Paper 34, November 2014, http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/research/files/papers/2014/11/western-foreign-fighters-in-syria-and-iraq-byman-shapiro/be-afraid--web.pdf. Malise Ruthven, "The Lure of the Caliphate", *New York Review of Books*, 28/02/2015, http://www.nybooks.com/blogs/nyrblog/2015/feb/28/lure-caliphate-isis/.

[27] Richard Barrett, *The Islamic State*, November 2014, p. 7, http://soufangroup.com/the-islamic-state/?catid=1.

about $800 a month, including special allowances, compared with $400 a month for Syrian fighters."[28]

But above all, there is a quest for dignity: "The quest for dignity is a common denominator among Islamists" and constitute "a variable often ignored by contemporary political analysts in the West".[29]

In view of the many reasons why so many French citizens are flocking to Syria it appears that there is no single pathway, no common socioeconomic background and no common religious upbringing. However, Jessica Stern explains the phenomenon through the circumstances: "Holy wars take off when there is a large supply of young men who feel humiliated and deprived; when leaders emerge who know how to capitalize on those feelings."[30]

In the particular French context, what we do know with certainty about the increasing number and diversity of nationals volunteering for the jihad is that they do not all fit the stereotype of the poor or unemployed or marginalized. It is not surprising in a country whose Muslim immigrants have "high level of joblessness, low education attainment, and often difficulty finding social acceptance"[31], that national statistics show that a great number of jihadis do come from poor and neglected areas, and have been unemployed. Indeed, one fourth of the French recruits come from Seine Saint Denis, one of the 100 French departments known for high rates of unemployment. However, scholars have already shown that there is no direct relationship between unemployment due to discrimination and terrorist acts, and indeed, some of the French jihadis had a job or even a business they left to join ISIS and many come from middle-class and well-to-do families.

French recruits do not all fit the stereotype of the uneducated or illiterate individuals: some of them have received secondary education and others hold high university degrees but have decided to use the training and experience acquired in the "country of infidels" for the benefit of the caliphate.[32] Also, the recruits no longer just come from the margins of society: some of them have had a social life and seemed quite integrated until they realized they had a chance of moving to a Muslim land, and of living under the Muslim Law without any restriction or stigmatization. Actually, even former French army soldiers are today fighting under the jihadist flag – a dozen of them – as well as

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[28] "In Islamic State Stronghold of Raqqa, Foreign Fighters Dominate", *Wall Street Journal*, 04/02/2015, http://www.wsj.com/articles/in-islamic-state-stronghold-of-raqqa-foreign-fighters-dominate-1423087426.

[29] Ayoob, M. "Political Islam: Image and Reality," *World Policy Journal*, Vol. 21 Issue 3, 2001.

[30] Stern, J. "Beneath Bombast and Bombs, a Caldron of Humiliation," *Los Angeles Times*, 06/06/2004.

[31] Mark Lilla. "France on Fire", *New York Review of Books*, 05/03/2015, http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2015/mar/05/france-on-fire/?insrc=rel.

[32] Diego Gambetta. "Why are there so many Engineers among Islamic Radicals?", *European Journal of Sociology*, Volume 50, Issue 02, August 2009, pp. 201-230.

some former *Foreign Legion* fighters and parachutists;[33] which raises once again the question of Muslim integration in France and highlights how it is considerably more complicated than reports of its economic and social failures have suggested.

French recruits do not all fit the religious stereotype of a jihadi of Muslim origin. While the majority of recruits are males of Muslim origin, coming from family circles that often did not dispense any religious teaching, a significant number of them have no Muslim background at all and others are recent converts[34]. Some of the converts may have received a strict Catholic education; however, the large majority have had no traditional religious education and come from totally secular families. A common feature of all of them, whether of Muslim origin or converted, is that they know very little about Islam since jihadi indoctrination does not require any solid mastering of the religious texts or knowledge of historical facts. Also, ISIS French recruits do not all fit the stereotype of the urban candidate. Actually, not only do volunteers come from all French regions[35], they don't all come from large cities or troubled banlieues. Quiet provincial towns or rural villages have been confronted with the phenomenon, with inhabitants and local officials left in total dismay.[36]

It is well known now that the caliphate appeals to both genders and that its propaganda has been portraying women as indispensable partners in the building of a society by and for Sunni Muslims, first as wives and then as mothers of the next generation of jihadis. There are certainly many reasons why France is the Western nation that supplies the largest number of ISIS female recruits (The majority of them are believed to be between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five.), but one of them is surely related to the desire to escape from a nation where to be an equal citizen requires abandoning the dictates of one's religion and where wearing the veil is perceived as a defiance of French culture. In the post-national, post-racial, and perfect Islamic society that ISIS professes to have created, women are not mocked or despised for wearing Islamic clothing and are instead honoured and respected.

Like all foreign women recruited by ISIS, although they are prevented from fighting by Sharia law, they have become ISIS's most vocal and visible supporters, chief recruiters, groomers and propagandists actively spreading the organization's message. It has been established that after the Paris attacks, the number of French women who have left the country to join ISIS has been on the rise and that in an equally unprecedented fashion, entire families have also moved to Syria.

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[33] Thomson, D. *Les Francais Jihadistes*, Les Arènes, 2014.

[34] It had been estimated in 2012 that every year there are around 4,000 conversions in France. *Le Parisien*, 18/10/2012, http://www.leparisien.fr/espace-.

[35] "Les nouveaux chiffres de la radicalisation," *Le Monde*, 26/03/2015, http://www.lemonde.fr/police-justice/article/2015/03/26/les-nouveaux-chiffres-de-la-radicalisation_4602011_1653578.html.

[36] This was especially the case in Lunel, a small town near the Mediterranean coast, where as many as 20 people – out of a population of just 25,000 – have travelled to fight with ISIS.

Faced with the jihadi phenomenon, the French authorities seem to be totally overwhelmed and, despite their vigilance, they have not been able to profile and detect all potential candidates for the jihad.[37] However, they are trying to put in place a series of measures to prevent the jihadis' departure, to review and develop the existing anti-terrorism legislation, and to fight the spreading radicalization wherever it has taken hold.

II. France's Responses to the Paris Attacks

1. Reinforcing the Existing Legislation

The French government has been under pressure to increase national security in the wake of the Paris attacks. Like the USA after 9/11, France has responded to the Paris attacks by ratcheting up domestic surveillance and by developing and reinforcing a set of existing laws already considered to be among the strictest in Europe. Indeed, ahead of all other European countries, France had early on introduced a strong legislation against terrorism and since the terrorist attack of 1986, has reinforced and completed its extensive legislative arsenal to fight terror.[38]

Immediately after the tragic attacks, France raised the nationwide terror alert to its highest level – Plan Vigipirate Rouge – and deployed about 120,000 police and military personnel to protect public places all over the country. In the following days, the government announced a €425m anti-terrorist programme, which includes significant increases in intelligence gathering and surveillance. In addition to security measures, the French government has been focusing on prevention measures and on legislation geared towards monitoring potential threats more closely.

Before the attacks, the state had already passed a counter-terrorism law in November 2014, allowing the authorities to prosecute the promotion of terrorism or incitation to hatred. That law, which had also already intensified Internet surveillance, prohibits "travel abroad to take part in terrorist activities, war crimes, or in the theatres of operation of terrorist groups", and allows for the withdrawal of identification documents for up to two years when an individual is suspected of such activities.[39]

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[37] According to the French media, "one out of every two Frenchmen who left to join Jihad were not detected prior to departure." http://www.20minutes.fr/societe/1566787-20150319-francais-deux-parti-faire-djihad-detecte-avant-depart.

[38] Legislation against terrorism is a special branch of criminal law with permanent derogations from common criminal procedure as regards to the length of police detention or the length of remand. The basic law against terrorism, which is the statute of September 9, 1986, has been completed and adapted by five statutes: the statute of July 22, 1996, following the terrorist attack during the summer of 1995; the statute of November 15, 2001 following the World Trade Center attack; the statutes of March 18, 2003 and March 9, 2004 and the statute of January 23, 2006.

[39] Law no. 2014-1353 of 13 November 2014, called "Loi Cazeneuve".

A new bill that would make it easier for French intelligence services to detect potential terror threats was announced on March 19, 2015. The bill, which will be examined in April by the parliament, places unprecedented power in the hands of the prime minister's office. It contains measures that permit intelligence services to spy on the digital and mobile communications of anyone linked to a "terrorist" enquiry without prior authorization from a judge. It also allows the authorities to force Internet service providers (ISPs) and phone companies to give up data upon request. And it authorizes intelligence services to use geolocation trackers on suspects' cars and to place cameras and recording devices in their homes.

Furthermore, the government is considering restoring the legal concept of "national unworthiness". Under a law passed after World War II, those prosecuted for collaboration with the Nazis became second-class citizens, stripped of the right to vote, to join unions or to hold state-funded jobs. The law was scrapped in 1951, but the government has called on parliament to examine its potential restoration.

The government is stepping up its policing capabilities and is allowing for more draconian measures of surveillance and control so as to compensate for high-profile intelligence failures. The January 2015 attacks constitute indeed a major failure of the French intelligence and security services and have provoked a large debate about the quality of intelligence gathering in France. Long considered among the best in the world, French security officials may have disrupted many terrorist plots but they lamentably failed to prevent Mohammed Merah, Mehdi Nemmouche, the Kouachis brothers and Coulibaly from undertaking their deadly assaults though they were all supposed to be under surveillance.

The authors of the Paris attacks (the Kouachis brothers and Coulibaly) were born and raised in France, had long criminal records, were connected to militant jihadis and were well known to the French authorities. They nevertheless were capable of "falling under the radar" and managed to get more radicalized and militarily trained without being detected.[40]

Intelligence services' limited ability to track potential radicals has become a public debate in which surveillance services have been criticized or mocked for putting too much faith in electronic eavesdropping.[41]

Since the terrorists' strategy has changed and their methods have grown more sophisticated and less predictable, the intelligence services should have been appropriately funded to adequately address the new challenges.[42] These challenges have been

[40] It was only after he revealed it himself, that the French authorities found out that Said Kouachi had travelled to Yemen where he met with the radical American-born preacher Anwar al-Awlaki, the senior Al Qaeda commander, since then killed by a US drone strike.

[41] The electronic surveillance employed in France was largely limited to listening in on cellphone conversations.

[42] Current and former officials point to the lack of resources to conduct physical surveillance on large numbers of targets, estimating that 25 agents, working in shifts, are required to watch over a single person day and night.

aggravated by the closing of the French embassy in Damascus and the drying up of the cooperation with the powerful Syrian intelligence services. Such a cooperation could have proven useful in tracking French suspects in the region before they came back to carry out attacks on French soil.

Not all French citizens will tolerate a US-style Patriot Act that gives the government vast surveillance powers over the private lives of citizens. And indeed some of the measures have already drawn sharp criticism from civil rights groups. Some have already denounced this reinforced new arsenal as infringing on freedom of speech and freedom of movement or as violating citizens' basic civil liberties and rights to privacy. Some have expressed their concern that while these new measures are primarily targeting France's Muslim population, they will nevertheless be used against any opposition to state policies. Despite the criticisms, polls show that the vast majority of the population supports some of the adopted measures, and that overall, the need for national security overrides concerns for civil liberties. The majority of the population supports as well the increase of resources for intelligence gathering, surveillance and prevention of further radicalization and is willing to accept stricter limits on freedom of speech to stop the spread of terrorist ideology. In fact, 53% of French citizens believe their country is at war and 81% favour stripping French nationality from dual nationals who have committed an act of terrorism on French soil.[43] Also, 68% consider that French citizens should be banned from returning to the country if "they are suspected of having gone to fight in countries or regions controlled by terrorist groups."[44]

The radicalization-prevention programme is mobilizing all the government departments but French officials acknowledged that the security measures must also imply increased interaction between parents and police. A special national hotline that allows families to report departure risks has been established[45] and psychological support for individuals identified as being at risk has been organized.

The special cooperation that the government is establishing with civil society is stretching to and including the French Muslim community. Aware that neither prevention nor repression will be effective without French Muslim cooperation, the state has been requesting support from French Muslims, especially in the "sensitive" zones

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[43] "Déchéance de la nationalité: le 'oui' massif des Français," *Journal du Dimanche*, 18/01/2015, http://www. lejdd.fr/Politique/Decheance-de-la-nationalite-le-oui-massif-des-Francais-713280. Revoking citizenship is illegal when it will leave the individual without any citizenship. Article 25 of the French Civil Code allows for French citizenship to be revoked if an individual of dual-citizenship is convicted of violating the fundamental interests of the nation or of committing terrorism. In late January, the Constitutional Council approved the revocation of a Franco-Moroccan jihadist's citizenship.

[44] Ipsos/Sopra-Steria poll produced for *Le Monde*, January 28/01/2015, http://www.europe1.fr/societe/les-francais-moins-defiants-vis-a-vis-de-l-islam-2356005.

[45] 3,142 people were brought to the attention of the authorities by their friends or relatives, or by public services. One quarter of them are minors, 35% are women, and 40% are converts. "Les nouveaux chiffres de la radicalisation," *Le Monde*, op. cit.

where there is a radical environment. The authorities are also aware that "a counter-radicalization policy which would not involve French Muslims could only aggravate the already widespread feelings of stigmatization."[46]

2. Fighting Radicalization Online

ISIS's use of media and social networks has been instrumental in securing a widespread following and in speeding up the mobilization while making jihad accessible and appealing to Western youth.[47] Using highly sophisticated and tech-savvy recruitment machinery that present Syria as the central battlefield in the final struggle between Islam and its enemies, ISIS efforts focus on attracting foreign fighters.[48] Its propaganda, which is particularly slanted toward European fighters, glorifies the role they will play on the battlefields as well as in defending and consolidating the caliphate.[49]

In its attempts at strengthening the fight against indoctrination on the Internet and social networks and at dissuading would-be jihadis from joining ISIS, the French government has released an online anti-campaign meant to denounce ISIS ideology, violence and terror, and to blunt the recruiters' messages by exposing the reality of the caliphate.[50] The online counter-campaign is also carefully tailored to reach female audiences, and to warn them about the dangers of joining the caliphate, emphasizing the illusions and disillusions pertaining to the process.

Furthermore, the government has also devised a new law aimed at escalating state surveillance of the Internet and social media sites. The new law will allow French authorities to block extremists' ability to use websites and videos to promote terrorism, indoctrinate, and recruit. The French authorities have also called on tech companies to join in the fight against extremist propaganda and have requested that editors or hosting providers withdraw unlawful content. Google, Facebook and Twitter have been invited

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[46] Pierre Conesa. "Quelle politique de contre-radicalisation en France?," Diploweb, 09/01/2015, http://www.diploweb.com/Contre-radicalisation-que-faire.html.

[47] "How is ISIS luring Westerners?," 23/02/2015, http://www.kbzk.com/story/28585637/why-is-isis-so-successful-at-luring-westerners.

[48] Jessica Stern and J.M Berger, "ISIS and the Foreign-Fighter Phenomenon," 8/3/2015, www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/03/isis-and-the-foreign-fighter-problem/387166. Richard Barrett, *Foreign Fighters in Syria*, June 2014, http://soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/TSG-Foreign-Fighters-in-Syria.pdf.

[49] Videos seen all over the world have shown the emphasis put on foreign fighters when they are the ones who execute hostages and threaten Western governments.

[50] A graphic two-minute video released three weeks after the Paris attacks showed clips of executions, wounded children and crucifixions.

to work directly with French officials during investigations and to immediately remove extremist propaganda when authorities alert them to it.[51]

However, critics have deemed these blockage measures quite naïve because individuals susceptible to turning toward radical violence can always activate any website. They also found the online campaign and its video slightly comical with its infantile and ridiculous counter-messages. They are, however, more hopeful with the measures being put in place to control radicalization in prisons and to review the educational system in order to prevent any radicalization of younger generations.

3. Controlling radicalization in prisons

Once it was realized that radicalization had been spreading in France, focus has been concentrated on mosques. But it has been observed that many young French Muslims who embrace the jihad do so without ever having been to a mosque. Most of them self-radicalize in the privacy of their homes, alone in their bedrooms, and they do so with a very basic knowledge of Islam.

Most of them also get radicalized in prison and many scholars who have analyzed this phenomenon demonstrated that prisons have been, for decades, an ideal ground for re-islamization and proselytism.[52]

Although no official data exist, more than half of the inmates in French prisons are believed to be Muslims, rising to 60-70% in some urban areas. That is at least five times more than the Muslims' share of the population. Islam first made its way into French prisons in the beginning of the 1970s with *Tabligh*, a pious and rigorist movement. Later, in the 1980s, prison authorities tolerated the introduction of Islam in prisons in order to counter the influence of dangerous criminals and gangsters.

It was not until the civil war in Algeria and Khaled Kelkal's radicalization in prison that the state realized that French jails could become recruitment centres for violent Islamists.[53]

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[51] Following the model currently in place to fight human trafficking and pornographic material, France wants jihadi material targeting minors on the Internet to be treated like child pornography, but no law had been passed until the February 6, 2015 decree. Under the terms of the decree, Internet service providers must block any websites that promote terrorism or child pornography within 24 hours of receiving an official notification.

[52] Khosrokavar, F., *L'Islam dans les prisons*, Paris, Balland, 2004. Mark, S. Hamm, *The Spectacular Few: Prisoner Radicalization and the Evolving Terrorist Threat*, NYU Press, 2013. Andrew Silke (ed), *Prisons, Terrorism and Extremism*, Routledge, 2014.

[53] Khaled Kelkal was re-converted to Islam in jail, where he came into contact with Salafis with strong links to the Algerian jihadi networks.

Problems of over-crowding and under-staffing, which have been extensively documented,[54] remain a serious concern not only because they have led to many suicides[55] but also because it has been demonstrated that they amplify the conditions that lead to radicalization.

Prisons have been under the surveillance of French counter-terrorism services for a long time. However, it took some time for French authorities to have a full understanding of radicalization as "a process by which an individual or a group adopts a violent form of action as a consequence of extreme political, social or religious ideologies questioning the prevailing social, cultural and political order"[56] and to acknowledge that radical Islamists were taking advantage of all kinds of frustrations to sensitize Muslim prisoners to their radical interpretation of Islam.

The French perception of radicalization, which was elaborated between 2002 and 2005, has for a long time defined terrorism as violent acts performed in a concrete violation of laws, and not as the ideological culmination of a radicalization process.

But, French authorities gradually took into account the phenomenon of radicalization when they observed that proselytism was quickly increasing and that vulnerable young men, often times jailed for minor offences, were emerging as hardened radicals ready for jihad.[57] Thus, they concentrated their efforts on detection and gradually increased their surveillance methods but no de-radicalization programme was put forward. However, it has become more difficult to detect radicals since, over the past few years, jailed radicals have responded to increased surveillance by switching from public proselytizing to a silent expression of religious beliefs and to discreet and clandestine forms of indoctrination. They no longer display their creed and rather act in a covert

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[54] "In most cells of some 9 square meters there are two and sometimes three prisoners […] there is one prison guard supervising some 100 inmates," observed Khosrokhavar, "Prisons and radicalization in France", 19/03/2015, https://www.opendemocracy.net/farhad-khosrokhavar/prisons-and-radicalization-in-france. "Prisons are so poorly controlled that a leaked French government report once described Osama bin Laden posters hanging on inmates' walls". Michael Birnbaum, "French prisons, long hotbeds of radical Islam, get new scrutiny after Paris attacks," *Washington Post*, 28/01/2015, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/paris-killers-radicalized-in-prison-now-leaders-want-to-fix-that-problem/2015/01/28/52271e28-a307-11e4-91fc-7dff95a14458_story.html.

[55] The French prison system suffers more inmate suicides than any other European country, according to the Council of Europe.

[56] Randy Borum, "Radicalizationin to Violent Extremism: A Review of Social Science Theories," *Journal of Strategic Security*, 4:4. (2011), pp. 7–35. Alexandre Wilner and Claire-Jehanne Dubouloz, "Homegrown Terrorism and Transformative Learning: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Understanding Radicalization", *Global Change, Peace, and Security*, 22:1 (2010), pp. 1–26.

[57] Guillaume Larrivé, "Rapport pour un plan d'action anti-radicalisation islamiste en prison," October, 2014. "Un rapport explosif sur l'islam radical dans les prisons françaises," *Le Figaro*, 23/10/2004, http://www.lefigaro.fr/actualite-france/2014/10/22/01016-20141022ARTFIG00314-un-rapport-explosif-sur-l-islam-radical-dans-les-prisons-francaises.ph1.

manner.[58] They also found new ways of developing small networks, often discreetly built into sport activities or apprenticeship classes and largely invisible to the detection strategies set up by the prison authorities, which used to regularly dismantle larger groups.

Acknowledging that prisons have become a dangerous stepping stone toward extremism, the state is devising a new policy. One priority will be to develop awareness among penitentiary staffers for collecting intelligence and enhancing detection capabilities.[59] Another is the promotion of moderate Islam in jails through the appointment of "made in France" imams as counter-radicalization agents. Prime Minister Valls has announced that 60 additional Muslim chaplains will be added to the 167 currently hired in the 190 French prisons. It is a considerable increase in the number of imams; however, specialists of radicalization in prisons considerer that at least three times as many chaplains are needed, and insist that they should be more uniformly distributed throughout the prisons.

In response to the issue of space and overcrowding, the government is considering building new prisons and has already undertaken the renovation of some very old ones. Also, since it has been estimated that up to a third of prison inmates have psychological problems, with 10% of them suffering from mental illnesses, and that most of them fall prey to radicalization, there are plans to hire 100 psychologists and counsellors.[60]

However, the issue of discrimination, which remains an important factor leading to radicalization, has not been addressed. Radicalization specialists have drawn attention to the effects of discrimination towards jailed Muslims and demonstrated how it has been exacerbating hatred and fuelling feelings of separation. They have observed that more often than not, the road to Islamism does "not begin with Islam but with hatred".[61]

French officials have also realized that extremists who have been radicalized in prison tend to become more dangerous radicals than those who became radicalized outside prison and the government's idea of separating radical Islamist prisoners from the rest of the prison population to protect impressionable inmates from indoctrination has become a topic of public debate inside and outside jail. Some non-Muslims prisoners are denouncing the project, which they view as special treatment for Muslims and

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[58] As Khosrokhavar explained (op. cit.): "Most of the people who get radicalized in prison know very well they should not let their beards grow, should not go to collective Friday prayer when it exists. The ones who do, potentially drawing guards' attention, are usually the ones who are harmless."

[59] Already a course on radicalization in jails is provided at Ecole Nationale d'Administration Pénitentiaire (ENAP).

[60] Damien Sharkov. "France to Begin New Prison Anti-Radicalisation Programme," *Newsweek*, 2/19/15, http://www.newsweek.com/france-begin-new-prison-anti-radicalisation-programme-308052.

[61] Burgis, Tom. "The making of a French jihadi," *Financial Times*, 26 January 2015, http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/a7fd3d50-a302-11e4-9c06-00144feab7de.html#ixzz3WFvgjCpN.

a form of "positive discrimination", and outside prison, critics are very sceptical about the effectiveness of this measure in the fight against radicalization.

The state's attempts at controlling radicalization by increasing surveillance or by separating dangerous extremists might produce some results but the efforts at fighting radicalization and preventing extremists from taking action rely also on the important after-prison monitoring. And increasing resources to monitor their whereabouts when they are in liberty should be accompanied by adequate measures to facilitate their transition back into mainstream society – something that was obviously not well done for the terrorists who struck Paris in January.

4. Reviewing the Educational System

The French authorities are focusing on tightening security, on controlling the Internet and on fighting radicalization in prisons but they are also trying to build bridges to the millions of alienated French young Muslims through a reconsideration of the French educational system.

The French educational system has long been considered the best in the world. It remains an excellent one despite the deterioration it has experienced over the past decades. French schools are still dispensing high-quality education and the overall French students' performances remain excellent. However, the schools' failure to deliver on "l'égalité des chances," or equality of opportunity has become a feature of a system that needs some reviewing and adaptation.

The traditional meritocracy under which, in theory, children from any background, rich or poor, have equal chances at school and can propel themselves into the elite of society by sheer intellectual prowess has been considerably reduced. The French school is no longer the great leveller it was supposed to be: it has increasingly become a place where children from poor backgrounds do far worse than kids from better-off backgrounds, thus perpetuating social differences.[62]

The school's failure to live up to its principles of egalitarianism is aggravated by its failure to cater to the large number of children with immigrant backgrounds[63] – a school situation that highlights the general failure of 30 years of integration policies as has been acknowledged by Prime Minister Valls.

Not only is low educational achievement among pupils of Muslim origin a matter of concern but the fact that the school system has become wrought with ethnic and

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[62] According to the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), which evaluates the performance of 15-year-old students in literacy, mathematics and science in over 70 countries, the difference between the best- and worst-performing students is higher in France than in many other industrialized countries.

[63] Mattei, Paola. "The French Republican School under pressure: Falling basic standards and rising social inequalities," *French Politics*, 2012, Vol. 10, 1, 84-95. Van Zanten A. "Schooling Immigrants in France in the 1990's: Success or Failure of the Republican Model of Integration?", *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 28: 351-374.

cultural tensions is another important issue that the French authorities have lately decided to address. These tensions had already been outlined in a 2004 report that was not much publicized at that time.[64] The Obin report found that although there is no formal recognition of the cultural or religious background of pupils, teachers were regularly challenged and contested by Muslim students about courses or activities not deemed "Halal". School, which is rigorously non-religious and which has been traditionally seen as having the role of training and socializing young citizens in the secular values of the French republic, has gradually become an epicentre for the expression of a new religious identity. Another report in 2010 warned against a further deterioration of the school climate.[65] This situation was again highlighted in the Institut Montaigne's 2011 report that concluded that many Muslim pupils were refusing to integrate.[66]

The deterioration of the school climate has been brought to light in the wake of the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks, when teachers revealed that many of their Muslim students refused to obey a national minute of silence for the dead of *Charlie Hebdo*, stating that they felt that Islam has been an object of mockery and that the Prophet has been insulted. They also denounced the double standard rules about freedom of speech, explaining that *Charlie Hebdo* was allowed to insult Islam while others are jailed for racist remarks.[67]

In light of this situation, and in order to ease the tensions, the government has come up with a new set of measures concentrated on schools with a large number of Muslim students and these measures are dedicated to reinforcing secular values.[68] Chief among the new measures is a plan to reinstate civics classes that will stress social responsibility, respect for others, and the values of Laïcité.[69] The government has thus announced a 250 million-euros plan to train about 1,000 educators on questions of Laïcité. The trained educators are expected to lead debates on issues in which Islam takes a different

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[64]   Jean Pierre Obin, "Les signes et manifestations d'appartenance religieuse dans les établissements scolaires," June 2004, ftp://trf.education.gouv.fr/pub/edutel/syst/igen/rapports/rapport_obin.pdf. The report was based on on-site visits government inspectors made to over sixty middle and high schools across France, concentrating on difficult *quartiers*.

[65]   Rapport du Haut Conseil à l'Intégration (HCI) "Relever les défis de l'intégration à l'école," October 2010, C:\DOCUME~1\MANSUT~1\LOCALS~1\Temp\rapport collège-1.doc.

[66]   Op. cit.

[67]   A schoolteacher in Clichy-sous-Bois, a heavily immigrant suburb, told the French TV that three quarters of his students had refused to observe the moment of silence, explaining that "the murders were justified" because they considered that it was forbidden to make blasphemies or insult the prophet through drawings or speech.

[68]   "Ecole: les mesures du gouvernement pour renforcer les «valeurs de la République»," *Le Parisien*, 22/01/2015, http://www.leparisien.fr/societe/ecole-les-mesures-pour-renforcer-les-valeurs-de-la-republique-22-01-2015-4469259.php#xtref=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.fr%2F.

[69]   In April 2013, then French Education Minister Vincent Peillon had already announced a plan that would force students in primary and secondary schools to debate "secular morality" [*morale laïque*] for one hour every week beginning in September 2015. The plan was never implemented.

position, to teach basic rules of civility and French values of "vivre ensemble," and to counter the too-popular "conspiracy theories" many Muslim students believe adamantly. They will also have to address the issues of violence and sexism that have invaded French schools and to restore a sense of authority.[70]

Also, even though religious education is normally banned in state-financed public schools, the French authorities are considering introducing some teaching about Islam in the school curriculum. This last measure is considered as a serious breach by critics of the government's efforts and has been feeding a debate about schools that raises the fundamental and existential issues at the heart of today's French identity. This debate has been brilliantly summarized by Mark Lilla, who wrote: "Integrationists see an increasingly fundamentalist Islam as a threat to the French model and think that the schools should actively resist it by teaching secular values; classic republicans think that the state must keep religion completely out of the schools but should not interfere with private beliefs; and multiculturalists think that Islam is simply being stigmatized, that social exclusion is mainly to blame, and that differences of all sorts should be represented and celebrated in schools".[71]

Overall, France has realized that it has to improve its severely dysfunctional educational system in order to restore the egalitarian character of national education, to re-establish a republican identity, to respect and unite its diverse populations and to prevent young generations from being tempted by radicalization.

The challenges are huge and the adopted measures have yet to prove efficient.

CONCLUSION

The Paris attacks have shocked the country and triggered demonstrations of unity and solidarity supported by the whole world. However, the attacks have also deepened the distrust of France's Muslim population in a country where difficulties, problems and malaise with integration have been on dramatic display for decades. They have also revealed that the state policies toward the Muslim communities have failed to address many of the underlying French society's vulnerabilities that radical Islamists have been exploiting. The French government seems to be dedicated to deploying efforts towards the French Muslim communities whose integration is key to domestic peace. It is also determined to respond to the risks and effects of radicalization with policies that will strike a balance between repressive and preventive measures.

[70] "L'école mobilisée pour former des citoyens," *Le Monde*, 22/02/2015, http://www.lemonde.fr/education/article/2015/01/22/l-ecole-mobilisee-pour-former-des-citoyens_4561563_1473685.html.

[71] Mark Lilla. "France on Fire," *New York Review of Books*, March 5, 2015, http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2015/mar/05/france-on-fire/?insrc=rel.

However, these measures will only be effective if they are accompanied by a thorough understanding of the social and political context in which radicalization and violent extremism are taking place.

The country is now faced with many challenges.

France had in the recent past to adjust to the nature of the terror threat that has changed since the mid-1990s, and adapt from dealing with groups acting on behalf of countries and/or nationalist claims to those promoting global jihad. Now, after the recent series of attacks, carried out with minimal funding, participants, and even contact with a formal terrorist group, France has to adapt to more homegrown terrorist attacks led by one person or a very small group using more and more unconventional tools of destruction. France has understood that its responses cannot be limited to countering acts of terrorism alone, but must also address how to counter ISIS narrative and propaganda to stop the flow of jihadis and provide positive alternatives. Thus, its responses cannot be limited to measures focused on security alone; otherwise it will be combating the symptoms of radicalization without addressing its roots and causes.

The French authorities are promoting cooperation with civil society actors and engaging the Muslim communities to be partners in preventing violent extremism from taking hold. They are also trying to foster a moderate Islam as a strong alternative to radical deviations and Salafi movements that have been indoctrinating and radicalizing the youth.

France's responses to terrorist threats are indeed trying to look at all the breeding grounds where radicalism is spreading, from schools to prisons, but no understanding of the whole situation will be complete as long as the state continues to ignore the impact of its foreign policy legacy in the Muslim world, from its colonial past to its current involvement in the wars in the Middle East and North Africa; and as long as the country does not address the legacy of hatred stemming from the Algerian war of independence and treat its unhealed wounds.

Already at war on Muslim foreign lands, France is also tackling the war within Islam on national soil. It will take decades before peace is restored outside and inside the country.

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Terrorism and Youth in the UK

Kamaldeep Bhui and J. Boora

"When I grow up I want to be a terrorist," says a young child whilst drawing a picture in a school. These frightening words are the self-expressions of a 10-year-old child from the UK. Indeed, these expressions show that children and young people in general are becoming more familiar with terms and words that are repeatedly shaped and fostered in a world in which the news is dominated by terrorism and global conflict. What is even more alarming, however, is the reality that extremist ideology and propensity to adopt terrorist thinking have become more blended within the fabric of mainstream society and, increasingly, people holding such views are of British origin.

The shocking footage of the random killing of a British solider near Woolwich barracks in London by Islamist extremist in May 2013 took matters to new heights. The TV coverage of the brutal killing of Drummer Lee Rigby on the streets of Britain astonished a whole nation, sending reverberations all over the world. The message was clear and for those living in the UK the question that arose was, who next? His death certainly assured many, in no uncertain terms, that a different form of violence had gripped the UK. Prime Minister David Cameron would respond in a statement outside Number 10: "This country will be absolutely resolute in its stand against violent extremism and terror"[1]. Terrorism activity in the UK has continued to escalate and what has become even more frightening is the rise of the radicalisation of British young people, reminding us that the threat of "home-grown terrorism" is very much alive. In this sense, the rise of terrorism in the UK has been striking ever since the terrorist attacks on 7 July 2005. In the immediate aftermath of those suicide attacks, concerns arose that many vulnerable individuals were at risk of becoming radicalised by terrorist groups, their sole objective being to engage in violence and to carry out acts of terrorism against the UK. MI5, the British security service, also believed that in 2007, an estimated 2,000 random individuals posed a direct threat to national security and public safety. The previous MI5 chief, Jonathan Evans, responsible for informing the wider security and public sectors, disclosed that "extremists were methodically and intentionally targeting young people and children in the UK, and that groups like Al-Qaeda

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[1] *The Guardian*, 22 May 2015.

were recruiting children as young as 15 years old to wage a deliberate campaign of terror in Britain"[2]. Moreover, in his first memorable speech after taking office, Mr. Evans warned that extremists were "radicalising, indoctrinating and grooming young, vulnerable people to carry out acts of terrorism" and that urgent action was required on the part of the UK government "to protect its children from exploitation by violent extremists". The former director of CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) Michael Hayden stressed that Al-Qaeda were actively seeking youths from western countries because of their familiarity with the language, culture and appearance (such as the 7/7 bombers) as these youth would therefore, as he states, "not illicit any notice whatsoever, from you if they were standing next to you in the airport". With this in mind it is hardly surprising that Al-Qaeda have referred to children and young people in the past as the "new generation of Mujahidin", and that estimates suggest that youth between 15-18 years old make up about 20 per cent of all suicide bombers. The current growing problems make it difficult to give precise figures.

The threat of home-grown terrorism was a point already highlighted early in 2005 by the then junior Home Office minister Hazel Bloom. She had warned us that home-grown terrorism had become a bigger threat than those from abroad. The ring leader for the July 7th 2005 bombings, Siddique Khan, had also engaged in such activities abroad before killing himself in July. Evidence to CLG (Communities Local Government) select committee ACPO (Association Chief Police Officers) highlighted the fact that one of the July 7th bombers, Hasib Hussain, had drawn graffiti in support of Bin Laden and 9/11 attacks on his exercise books whilst at high school in Leeds. Similarly, Jermaine Lindsey, another of the July 7th bombers, had attempted to access radical Islamist websites whilst at high school in Huddersfield. Moreover, past reports warned that at least three separate Al-Qaeda-related operations had involved people who became involved in extremism while they were at school, including those involved in the July 7th bombings and the 2006 Trans-Atlantic flight plot

The British government's response to these attacks would be in the form of a strategic counter-terrorism document developed by the Home Office in 2003 called "CONTEST"[3]. This was updated in 2009 with "CONTEST II'" and the most recent version by the Home Office, in 2011, is called "CONTEST III". With many strands of operation to this counter-terrorism strategy, it quickly acquired a reputation that has managed to transform many services and organisations delivering preventative work. The strategy described its key features in the form of: Pursue, Protect, Prepare and Prevent. The Prevent strand is the most applicable to many frontline professionals and organisations, especially those services working with young people. The remaining three strands, Pursue, Prepare and Protect, would be applicable to security, intelligence

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[2] MI5 Jonathan Evans, 2007.

[3] Home Office website www.gov.uk – Government "Contest Strategy".

and law enforcement agencies, though some overlap would be inevitable. Prevent acquired a growing recognition and is defined in the current counter-terrorism strategy as:

> The purpose of *Prevent* is to stop people from becoming or supporting terrorism. This includes countering terrorist ideology and challenging those who promote it; supporting individuals who are especially vulnerable to becoming radicalised; and working with sectors and institutions where the risk of radicalisation is assessed to be high.[4]

Prevent, launched in the wake of the July 7th London bombings, significantly instructed many regarding measures for "preventing violent extremism". These are broken down into the following objectives:

> Objective 1. Ideology – respond to the ideological challenge of terrorism and the threat we face from those who promote it.

> Objective 2. Individuals – prevent people from being drawn into terrorism and ensure that they are given appropriate advice and support.

> Objective 3. Institutions – work with sectors and institutions where there are risks of radicalisation which we need to address.

This was not as straightforward as originally envisaged and required additional expert support. A police-led project called "Channel" was initially set up in 2006 by ACPO (Association Chief Police Office). The explicit purpose was to provide support to those agencies involved and to centralise communications to respond to concerns of extremism or terrorism. Channel encouraged referrals of those considered at risk and was loaded with a wealth of information, and those external agencies that were contemplating how to engage in counter-terrorism work expected to gained strength from its provisions and support. A document entitled "Channel: Protecting vulnerable people from being drawn into terrorism, a guide for local partnerships (October 2010)"[5] provided the platform in terms of raising awareness and providing the operational systems and processes to share information. The document – which explores the issues of identification – explains in detail the ways in which a person can be drawn towards terrorism and become vulnerable to radicalisation. Its range of indicators consisted of the following referral criteria: use of inappropriate languages, possession of violent extremist literature, behavioural changes, the expression of extremist views, advocating of violent actions and means, association with known extremists and seeking to

4   The Home Office www.gov.uk – "CONTEST".

5   "Channel: Protecting vulnerable people from being drawn into terrorism, a guide for local partnerships (October 2010)".

recruit others to an extremist ideology[6]. Principally, these indicators were tasked with recognising distinct behaviour, signs and triggers that were similar to those associated with a wide context from related disciplines, for example, anti-social and offending behaviour. This was also advantageous in terms of safeguarding the welfare of children and young people from extremism. It provided a clear criteria to identify risks in terms of: engagement with a group, cause or ideology, intent to cause "harm", and capability to cause "harm". Its formal launch during 2006 saw a minimum of five referrals; astonishingly, this figure rose to approximately 748 during 2007/08. On par with this, there have been an estimated 44,000 young people that have attended "preventing violent extremism" programmes across the UK since the terrorist attacks in 2005. These figures may have risen since then.

Since the London terror attack in 2005, an estimated £45 million has been made readily available for the "preventing violent extremism" programme during the period of 2008-2011, primarily through the DCLG (Department Communities Local government). However, this figure rose to an estimated £140 million during 2008/2009 across a variety of organisation, including Home Office, DCLG, Foreign Office, and the then Department for Children, Schools and Families, now the Department for Education. In addition, during 2008-2010, an estimated £3.5 million was allocated to the Youth Justice Board to disseminate between youth offending teams for the purpose of preventing violent extremism amongst children and young people.

The periodic burst of terrorism activity has continued to escalate into the twentieth-first century. The number of casualties that are recorded as being a direct result of a terrorist attack has gradually grown, reaching into the hundreds and thousands, making the loss of life in terms of any one violent action even more devastating in comparison to other violent actions such as gun crime or murder. Unlike crime, the motivations behaving terrorist attacks make this even more worthwhile in terms of its drivers, ideology and outcome, which can be numerous, such as religion, and the risks to national security and public safety is enlarged. This can also be elevated by events outside of the UK. A point that has repeatedly been cited by terrorism experts Peter Bergen and Paul Cuickshank is that "the Iraq war has generated a stunning sevenfold increase in the yearly rate of fatal jihadist attacks." Other sources indicated in 2005 that "hundreds of terrorism suspects were under MI5 surveillance"[7] and, according to a publication by *The Times* in 2005, "10,000 people have attended extremism conferences"[8].

The impact of the media on the threat of extremism cannot be under-estimated. A *Sky News* report in February 2015, informed us that police were assessing Al Shabaab threats to the US and the UK. According to the report, Islamist militants had released

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[6] "Channel: Protecting vulnerable people from being drawn into terrorism, a guide for local partnerships (October 2010)".

[7] *Charles Clarke to Parliament 2005*.

[8] *The Times* newspaper 2005.

a video in which they appeared to call for terrorist attacks on some of the busiest shopping areas in the US and the UK. The video had specifically mentioned Oxford Street and Shepherds Bush in London. The US authorities have taken these threats seriously, given that it was Somali-based militants that had claimed responsibility for the 2013 attack on an upmarket shopping mall in Kenya, which left 67 dead. Jen Johnson, the Secretary of Homeland Security in the US, said, "[A]nytime a terrorist organisation calls for an attack in a specific place, we've got to take that seriously." Another terrorism expert suggested that this could be spiralling out of control.

Richard Barrett, a former head of counter-terrorism at MI6, estimated that "possibly up to 300 people have come back to the UK" already, and warned that intelligence services faced an "impossible" task in trying to track them. He told *The Independent*, "If you imagine what it would cost to really look at 300 people in depth, clearly it would be completely impossible to do that, probably impossible even at a third of that number," and added that "police and intelligence resources were stretched in terms of numbers and knowing where the returning jihadists are." Mr. Barrett has co-authored a report, which concludes that more than 12,000 foreign fighters have gone to Syria since the war began, and states that it is "likely to be an incubator for a new generation of terrorists". An incubator that the UK would have the right social and political climate, conditions and capacity to foster. Problems have continued to escalate.

The Mail Online, published 12 September 2014, stressed that "British children under ten are being turned into 'junior Jihadists' as extremist groups such as ISIS bombed them with dangerous propaganda, according to London deputy manager, Stephen Green Haigh. He continues, 'some of them are very young, it's pretty horrendous when you hear some of these children are being radicalised – the threat of radicalisation of young people is real and this is a problem that is going to be with us not just now or for a couple of years, but for the next generation'". In another report, it stated that anti-terror police had also arrested a boy and a girl aged 16 in Mossley, Tameside, UK. The teens were held under suspicion of terror offences to do with the commissioning, preparation and inciting of acts of terrorism. Chief Superintendent Caroline Ball said, "I know news of an arrest made under terrorism legislation in the community will cause a certain amount of anxiety and people will understandably have questions." She continues, "[T]his investigation is as a result from law enforcement agencies so it prudent we act on that information". A BBC news interview televised on 17 October 2014, revealed that Scotland Yard have responded to at least "100 terror threats a week." The threat is global and is imminent, and is on our doorstep.

Reports have emerged that at least two girls had been in contact with known extremists. They had left their Glasgow home to head for Syria during 2014 after becoming radicalised. Moreover, in March 2015, a 19-year-old and two 17-year-olds, from Northwest London, were arrested on suspicion for preparing terrorist attacks. Another young man had been arrested by the police under the terrorism legislation, when it was

revealed that he had intentions to replicate Lee Rigby's murder. His previous association with the known extremist group Al-Muhajiroun was a contributory factor which the police said played a significant role in his radicalisation. He had also posted on his face-book page that he was "willing to die in the cause of Allah". Brusthom Ziamani, aged 19 from Camberwell, South London, was arrested in August 2014; he was found with a knife and a hammer in his possession. When questioned he said that he was inspired by those that had killed Drummer Lee Rigby in May 2013. It was later established that he had researched cadet bases looking for possible victims. Brusthom had heralded one of Lee Rigby's killers as a "legend". His arrest was a joint effort by the police and MI5. After Brusthom's sentencing, Deb Walsh, deputy head of counter-terrorism at the Crown Prosecution Service, said, "This case highlights how violent and extreme views on a page can become credible threats to the lives and safety of British citizens". It is hardly surprising then, that the most recent legislation introduced in February 2015, "Counter-terrorism and Security Act 2015", will place a legal duty on many profession-als, especially in schools, to respond to the issues of radicalisation and to put into place policies. Home Secretary Theresa May was adamant that this new legislation was vital. She stressed, "This legislation is important, the substance is right, the time is right and the way in which it has been developed is right." She continues, "It is not a knee-jerk response to a sudden perceived threat. It is a properly-considered, thought-through set of proposals that will help to keep us safe at a time of very significant danger. We are engaged in a struggle that is fought on many fronts and in many forms. It is a struggle that will go on for many years and the threat we face right now is perhaps greater than it ever has been – we must have the powers we need to defend ourselves."[9] The then deputy prime minister, Nick Clegg, also endorsed these views, stating, "When you have a new threat you have to consider, sensibly, led by the evidence, whether the new threat requires a new response." And according to Assistant Commissioner Mark Rowley, "the step-change in the extremist threat will continue even if the violence in Syria and Iraq subsides". This then leads us to consider how and why young people are becoming radicalised.

The causes of radicalisation and terrorism are as diverse as they are complex. The process of radicalisation can evolve in many ways and is not an overnight event. This implies that the radicalisation process can evolve in all directions, including non-vio-lent ones. Radicals or extremists can engage in non-violent behaviour without terrorist intent. In this sense, radicalisation expert Dr. Johnathan Gitthens Mazer urges us to consider that "[r]adicalisation is not limited". He elaborates by informing us that "we are part of the UK and this is a problem for everyone in the UK. In this day and age of technology which knows no bounds, we can't expect radicalisation to be limited to one area or another, I hope it not a growing trend, but it is not something that is going to go

9   http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/pa/article-2846735/New-anti-terror-measures-unveiled.html#ixzz3YKSHjBrH.

away"[10]. This also makes it even more difficult to profile what a terrorist or extremist may look like. This was apparent with those involved in the July 7th attacks. The House of Commons report (2006) into the events after the London bombings echoed this point, "What we know of previous extremists in the UK shows that there is not a consistent profile to help identify who may be vulnerable to radicalisation" (Home Office, 2005: 31).[11] It is here that organisations and services delivering counter-terrorism work must focus their efforts within a preventative approach. On this notion, a report issued by Demos, a think-tank on terrorism, highlighted the subject of prevention work, suggesting and informing us where targeted work should be situated. For example, "[p]revention work should focus on targeted interventions where there is a clear, identified danger or groups or individuals undergoing radicalisation to violence".

Yet, who is in a dangerous or high-risk group? Like any rare outcome, and despite the media portrayal, terrorism remains a rare event. It is difficult to identify those at risk; many decades of research into violent crimes or the risk of suicide, for example, show that proving predictive risk is very difficult. And many risk assessment inventories are ways of screening people by characteristics found in small groups of people convicted of terrorism (or crime) and then applied to whole populations in which many people with those characteristics may not go on to offend. Nonetheless, there seems to be varying perspectives, one being that terrorists are like any other criminals; they have histories of criminal behaviour, an inability to learn from experience, and callous unconcern characteristic of psychopaths, or anti-social personality disorders. This would make the search for terrorists like that for criminals in general and preventive measures should also target youth offending and conduct disorders in young people, and include parenting intervention, alongside preventing exposure to violence, which we know can result in the intergenerational transmission of offending and violence proneness.

Yet what has surprised many in the high-income democracies is the very absence of previous criminality in terrorists and the way terrorist actions were committed by soldiers, doctors, and students who seemed well adjusted and appeared to be reasonably well educated. In order to prevent more recruits to such causes we need to develop ways of understanding the early phase of extremism, perhaps when young people are beginning to develop sympathies for violent and terrorist causes. Understanding their need to take this path will help us better ensure they are protected from social and environmental as well as emotional factors. For example, in a study of 600 young adults of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin living in two UK cities, sympathies for terrorism were uncommon, and were unrelated to socioeconomic deprivation or adverse life events, but were related to better education. For a minority, they were related to wealth or at least not-poverty, and depressive thinking and feelings were relevant. This

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[10] Dr Githen Mazer, University of Exeter, Radicalisation conference event 2012, "Addressing many forms of violent extremism".

[11] Home Office: Prevent Strategy 2011.

perhaps links extremism to other forms of adverse outcomes for young people, like joining gangs, or taking up a path of crime, or taking illegal substances to cope with life stressors.

The new duty on schools, colleges and public services to ensure we combat extremism is most welcome (given the newly formed Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, which will come into force on 1 July 2015) but how we implement this and whether new school curricula are helpful requires a commitment to an international research programme that adopts a preventive approach that will explore the issues of health as a means to prevent radicalisation. It is hardly surprising, given the general election that took place on 7 May 2015, that the re-elected prime minister, David Cameron, under a majority conservative government, has announced on 13 May, that an additional £300 million will be made readily available to tackle and address the problems of extremism within the UK. We can also predict that further reforms will be on the horizon in reference to the Prevent agenda.

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Danish Preventive Measures and De-radicalization Strategies: The Aarhus Model

Preben Bertelsen

The Danish anti- and de-radicalization strategy involves three interwoven elements: (a) an early prevention and exit programme, (b) prosecution of radicalized persons who have committed violent crimes (in Denmark or in a foreign country), including measures such as confiscation of passport, and (c) prevention and countering of threats to national security, by the Danish Security and Intelligence Service (PET). The last two elements are in line with measures adopted by the international community. The element (a) is well known in some countries; however, the Danish programme and in particular the so-called Aarhus Model is quite unique. Thus, the Aarhus Model and its underpinning theory are presented below.

The Aarhus Model: Principles and Organization

The Aarhus Model comprises programmes for both early prevention and exit processes. The prevention programme aims to prevent further violent radicalization of youngsters who do not yet represent any danger or security risk but may become dangerous if their radicalization process continues in a violent direction (and who may then perpetrate acts of terrorism). The exit programme is directed at already radicalized people who have intentions and capabilities of committing politically and/or religiously motivated violent crimes and terrorism.

The purpose of the above anti- and de-radicalization measures is to stop or redirect the processes of violent radicalization. A main concern in this regard is to ensure constitutional rights and freedom of expression while at the same time acknowledging the democratic necessity of political and religious activities, and eventually, to guide the political and religious opinions, critiques and activities into legal modes of operation within the framework of democracy. So, the Aarhus Model's programmes of early prevention and exit have nothing to do with political or religious policing, nor do they have anything to do with being naive or not taking hard measures if necessary, which is made clear in the following official quotes:

> *The Mayor of Aarhus, Jacob Bundsgaard*: "Taking our starting point in the Danish democratic traditions about openness and dialogue, we wish to create a safe

and good city for all by working long-term and intensively with crime prevention, while at the same time clamping down on offences and tendencies towards harassment, racism and discrimination [in relation to Syria volunteers]. We wish to offer these people a chance of rehabilitation and return to an ordinary Danish everyday life characterized by security for themselves and the people who surround them." (Information package 2014)

The Section Chief, Toke Agerschou: "The goal … is to help youths and adults move away from the radical environments, which may involve crime and violence or helping to radicalize others so that they are channelled onto a different life trajectory." **(**Information package 2014)

The quotes are in accordance with the theoretical grounding of the Aarhus Model, i.e., the Life Psychological theory of approaching the targeted young people by basically regarding them as individuals striving for agency in their own and common life (which will be elaborated below).

The Aarhus Model has three main characteristics: (1) close and flexible cooperation among several already existing institutions and authorities working with exposed and vulnerable young people, (2) inclusion, and (3) scientific foundation.

The Aarhus measure is not about ideology, right-wing/left-wing politics, or Islam as such, and certainly not about stigmatizing groups of citizens. It is about criminal conduct and activism outside the law. Therefore the anti-radicalization project is organized as an SSP initiative (the SSP is an interdisciplinary collaboration between Schools, Social authorities, and Police aimed at crime prevention). The SSP interdisciplinary collaboration exists in all municipalities in Denmark. and has existed for almost 40 years; so, the Aarhus Model project is rooted in solid experience and know-how. The SSP organization provides a formal platform embracing exactly those institutions, resource networks and employees who are able to meet the particular needs of young people.

The Aarhus Model works in close cooperation with the anti- and de-radicalization research project at the Department of Psychology and Behavioural Sciences, as well as with experts in the fields of politics, sociology, psychology, acculturation and religion, at Aarhus University. Furthermore, the Aarhus Model team works with the social services, several ministries, and PET (the Danish Security and Intelligence Service). Furthermore, the project is based on close collaboration with similar approaches in Denmark and Europe as well as the European network RAN (Radicalization Awareness Network).

The approach of the Aarhus Model builds on the principle of inclusion, which can be defined as meaningful participation in common cultural, social, and societal life. The central idea of modern democracy is based on the legal participation of many different interest groups in an ongoing quest for the best possible solutions to emerging challenges. Therefore, the aim of the interventions of the early prevention and exit

programme of the Aarhus Model is to transform the personal, social, cultural and political motivations into legal modes of participation and citizenship.

Furthermore, the Aarhus Model is based on the discipline of Life Psychology (developed at the Department of Psychology and Behavioural Sciences, AU), which is a research project and an interdisciplinary approach integrating personality psychology, social psychology and societal psychology with social sciences (politics, sociology, jurisprudence) and humanities (culture, religion, ethics) in the understanding of radicalization processes, risk factors and resilience.

The Specific Elements of the Aarhus Model

The main initiatives of the Aarhus Model project are presented below.

The InfoHouse

The first piece of information about an individual stepping onto the path of violent extremism often comes from parents, teachers, youth club workers, outreach workers, social workers, and/or the police. The information is handed over to the InfoHouse, staffed by the East Jutland Police. The police staff initiates further inquiry and investigation and then (possibly) draws on a consulting interdisciplinary workgroup. An assessment based on the available information decides whether it is a case of violent radicalization, or just a case of "false positive", i.e., a relatively harmless case of legal radicalization, or sometimes a "youth rebellion". It may also be a case of social and/or psychological problems. If no real danger of violent radicalization is found, alternative adequate measures of social services or counselling may be suggested.

On the other hand, specific anti-radicalization measures will be taken in cases where risk factors of violent radicalization are identified. The InfoHouse will initiate contact to brief the person on the reports and the assessment, and to explain about the concerns concerning the dangerous developmental trajectory and mindset. In addition, parts of the person's network (family, peers, school, clubs) will – if available as resources – be mobilized in the process of helping the person to acknowledge and seek alternative, legal, ways to find answers to questions of life, as well as alternative ways to resolve resentment and offence (personal as well as social or cultural) and hopefully to make a legal difference to the community, society or the world as such.

Mentoring

Currently the Aarhus team has at its disposal a group of ten well-educated mentors employed by the Municipality of Aarhus and guided by a group of four mentoring coordinators. In order to form a broadly composed group who can meet the often different individual profiles and specific needs of the targeted persons, these mentors have been recruited with regard to age, gender, ethnic background, formal education and experi-

ence, first-hand knowledge of different cultural and social milieus, as well as political and religious knowledge.

Without doubt mentoring constitutes an essential element in the Aarhus Model. First, the mentor plays a significant role in the specific de-radicalization process by pointing to the pitfalls, the personal and societal dangers, the illegality as well as the mis-directedness of the particular activism. Second, the mentor helps to find paths of inclusion regarding the activities and tasks in the daily life of the mentee (family, work, education, leisure time). Third, the role of the mentor is to be a well-informed, interested and empathic sparring partner, with whom the mentee can discuss questions and challenges of daily life as well as the ultimate concerns of existential, political and religious questions of life.

Workshops

An important initiative with regard to early prevention is a series of two-hour workshops held in primary schools as well as high schools. The purpose of the workshops is to introduce young pupils and students to the threats of terrorism and violent radicalization through short presentations, dialogues/discussions, exercises, games and role-play. The basic aim is to help pupils and teachers recognize risk factors and markers of possible radicalization processes among their peers in order to be able to spot lurking radicalizing influence from recruiting groups. Furthermore the workshops aim to develop the young pupils' and students' awareness of digital behaviour, prejudice, exclusion, citizenship and participation in social life, community and society – and subsequently to develop resilience to the risk factors of violent radicalization by way of acknowledgement of good alternatives regarding political and religious interests and activism.

Parents Network

A parents network has been established for parents of right wing radicalized youth and Muslim jihadists. The network is led by process facilitators from the staff of the Aarhus Method team, and its purpose is to empower the parents with parental skills regarding the specific challenges of having a violently radicalized child, as well as to empower parents to be resource persons in a united anti- and de-radicalization effort.

Dialogues, especially with the Muslim communities

The Aarhus team is in continuous open dialogue with different Muslim communities, organizations and mosques in Aarhus about cooperation with the Aarhus Municipality with regard to preventing violent radicalization of their young members, including recruitment as violent jihadists from hole-and-corner agencies operating in the peripheries of the Muslim communities.

Exit Programme

A special exit programme for foreign fighters was initiated in 2013, aimed at de-radicalizing homecoming foreign fighters. The purpose of the exit programme is to help men and women who wish to abandon the violent trajectories and find their way back into society and be included in daily social life. If an exit programme is approved as feasible, the case is passed on to a task force who will then assess which specific services should be offered to the homecoming person as well as to the resource persons in his or her social network (family, peers, school, work etc.). Subsequently, a written exit-process cooperation agreement is made in collaboration with the homecoming person, who will then be offered help as regards employment/education, housing, psychological counselling/therapy and medical care, with a view to a successful exit process and inclusion in society.

Certainly, the exit programme is based on the precondition that the homecoming foreign fighter has done nothing criminal (if so, he or she will be prosecuted according to Danish law) and that the person is screened and assessed as not posing any security risk. The exit programme is established for those who are genuinely motivated to successfully complete an exit process, and strong measures are taken to prevent the exit programme from being used as some sort of hiding place for people intending to commit terrorist acts.

Education and Supervision of Staff

The staff of the Aarhus anti- and de-radicalization project, especially the mentors, workshop instructors and network facilitators, have received comprehensive training, comprising courses on radicalization processes, risk factors, conflict management and coaching, and, last but not least, Life Psychology (especially to help to train mentees in the development of fundamental life skills, including topics of group processes, identity formation in youth, and cultural psychology). Furthermore, by means of monthly meetings and ad hoc appointments with their coordinator mentors, and workshops, facilitators receive intensive supervision, also strongly inspired by Life Psychology.

LIFE PSYCHOLOGY – THE THEORETICAL GROUNDING FOR THE AARHUS MODEL

As stated above, Life Psychology provides the theoretical grounding for the Aarhus Model. Life Psychology is a scientific discipline rooted in psychology, social sciences and humanities, and was developed at the Department of Psychology and Behavioural Sciences, Aarhus University. This article only allows for a very brief introduction. However, a thorough presentation can be found in Bertelsen (2015), including proper references to contemporary research on radicalization and terrorism as well as the root disciplines mentioned above.

The primary presumption in Life Psychology is that everybody aspires to a good-enough life. "Good enough" because life is seldom (never) perfect in terms of avoiding various challenges, obstacles and setbacks in regard to one's aspirations and life projects.

The second presumption is that having a good-enough grip on life means coping sufficiently successfully with the tasks life offers, which depends on having the necessary skills to handle them. The tasks may be concrete daily-life tasks regarding one's social life, work or leisure, as well as making important choices, or perhaps a wish to make a difference in life.

A third presumption in Life Psychology is that every human being regardless of gender, cultural background, abilities and disabilities, life history as well as social situation is confronted with exactly the same fundamental life tasks. Having a good-enough life therefore implies having general generic human life skills by which one can handle the fundamental human life tasks. *General* because everybody must develop and form the same fundamental life skills matching the fundamental life tasks. *Generic* because every fundamental life task will surface in endless individual, social, cultural, and societal variations (implying that the specific handling of a specific variation of a fundamental life task must be generated from the corresponding fundamental life skill).
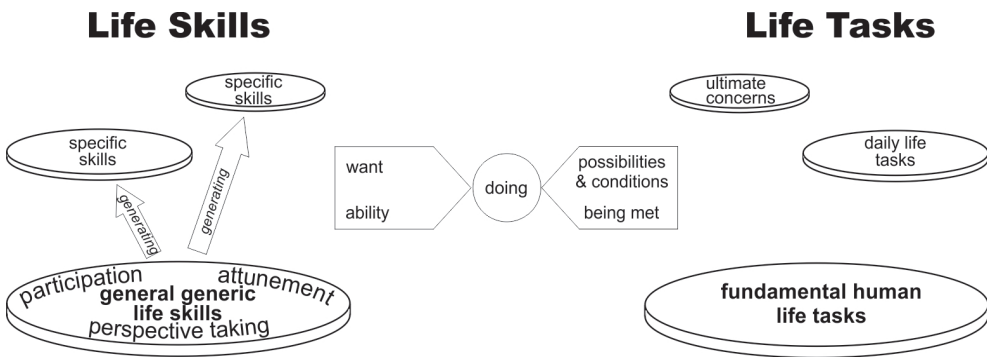
Figure 1. The connection between life skills and life task on different levels.

According to Life Psychology – and as illustrated in Figure 1 – the fundamental life tasks are about taking part in the formation of own and common life and about being pragmatically and morally attuned to the reality and morality of the surrounding world, as well as being able to navigate among different (sometimes conflicting) life discourses and life projects. More precisely, to have a good-enough grip on life is about (1) having and taking a personal position from where one can participate in constructing and maintaining one's own and common life, (2) attuning one's way of handling daily-life tasks as well as ultimate concerns to reality, pragmatically as well as morally, and (3) seeing oneself from one's own perspective (that is, reflecting on one's own life aspirations), from others' perspective (that is, empathic understanding of the life

aspirations of others'), and from the perspective of culture and society (cultural and societal discourses). In short, the general generic life skills are about *participation*, *realistic attunement* and *perspective taking* (which can be divided into specified sub-skills; please see Bertelsen 2015).

On the one hand, to develop and form a good-enough grip on life implies that one (from the psychological point of view) *will* and *can* realize one's life skills in regard to the life tasks one is confronted with. Just as the fundamental generic life skills are global categories for countless specifically generated skills, "will" – or "want" – is the global motivational category for psychological phenomena such as wishing, aspiring, intending etc., that is, motivational processes. Likewise, "can" – or "ability" – is the global cognitive category for the phenomena of knowing, thinking, reflecting etc. On the other hand (from a social, cultural, societal point of view), no matter what one will and can do, it has to be aligned with the *external possibility and conditions* as well as how one is *met by others* in order to succeed in having a good-enough grip on life. "External possibilities and conditions" are about the natural and political reality as conditions that determine which form of life can be lived and which cannot (at least not without further development of these possibilities and conditions). Even if the external possibilities and conditions are such that one can realize the life one aims at for oneself and others, this striving – for the vast majority – only succeeds when one is met by others, that is, acknowledged, supported and helped by others. Therefore, similar to what was pointed out above, "external possibilities and conditions" and "being met" are global phenomena comprising manifold specific external material, political and social life conditions. In other words, termed as life skills, one must be able to actually see or look for existing possibilities and expressions of being met. Or, alternatively, if these conditions do not exist in the proper forms and extents, one must as far as possible be able to take part in giving rise to them.

Finally, nothing happens if one *does* nothing to realize what one can and will according to possibilities and being met. All in all: The development of a good-enough grip on own and common life by means of general generic life skills must be based on an interplay between "want" plus "ability" and "external possibilities and conditions", and "being met by others", resulting in "doing". As can be seen in Figure 1, the specific realization forms – and ultimately *doing* – are the mutual results of, on the one hand, motivational and cognitive capacities and, on the other hand, reality conditions and social conditions connected to one's life tasks.

The Radicalization Process in Terms of Life Psychology – Based on the Notion of Fundamental Human Life Embeddedness

The above notions constitute the basic Life Psychological model of agency and having a good-enough grip on own and common life in general. As such the model provides the basis for a deeper understanding of human radicalization processes.

The model takes its point of departure in the main presumption that the well-being of human beings depends on having a good-enough grip on life. We all strive for a life embedded in a meaningful, safe and secure world for our loved ones and ourselves. In short: People strive for a good-enough fundamental *life embeddedness*.

As proposed by the basic Life Psychological model, people thrive and prosper when they are able to *do something* regarding own and common life tasks, that is, when they experience the good-enough grip on life and their life embeddedness are marked by *agency*. Moreover, one has a good-enough grip on life when the developmental and educational states of one's life skills are aligned with the tasks at hand. If this is the case, then one's effort to construct, maintain and personally shape and develop own and common life embeddedness is *in flow* (as defined by Csikszentmihalyi [1990]). One is *in flow* when the challenge level of one's tasks is aligned with one's skills. In comparison, one's grip on life is in a state of non-flow, when either the challenge level is too high compared to the skill level (ultimately the inability to handle one's life embeddedness) or too low (boring and non-challenging opportunities in regard to active and creative participation in own and common life embeddedness).

Therefore, one has a good-enough grip on life when one's fundamental life embeddedness thrives and prospers by means of *agency* and *flow* in realizing one's fundamental human life skills of participation, realistic attunement and perspective taking.

At times, however, it may become difficult, or even impossible, to be *in flow* as an agent in own and common life; for instance when one is confronted with – and one's life tasks are determined by – for example war, economic crisis, natural disaster, anomy or personal loss. All such phenomena form fundamental threats to one's fundamental life embeddedness (safety, security, agency and flow in realizing one's life skills). Perhaps the single most significant threat to decent human life embeddedness is living a life marked by social, cultural and/or societal exclusion, for example, threats (real or imagined) of exclusion from taking part in significant aspects of life. In such a situation the task (or impossibility) of social, cultural and societal participation is not aligned with the personal and general human urge to realize one's participatory skills, which represents a severe threat to the quality of agency and *participatory* flow in one's fundamental life embeddedness. Similarly, exclusion can take on the shape of non-acknowledgement or rejection of one's pragmatic ways of living one's life and/ or one's attempt to align one's ethics and moral standards with the surrounding world,

which may be a severe threat to one's urge to realize one's realistic *attunement* skills and therefore a serious threat to the agency and flow quality of one's fundamental life embeddedness. Finally, exclusion can form a severe threat to the quality of agency and flow in life embeddedness when one's *perspective taking* skills are blocked; that is, when one's ability to take into perspective own and others' perspective on life, according to the discourses of culture and society, is disturbed due to exclusion. That may happen when one has a lifelong experience of negative rhetoric, racism, severe ridiculing and not being taken seriously, perhaps starting already in primary school due to one's ethnicity, skin colour or religion.

It is a fundamental human urge to take care of one's fundamental life embeddedness, not least when it is threatened. Facing such threats, most people will attempt – if possible, with legal means – to restore the quality of agency and flow in life embeddedness, as illustrated in Figure 2.
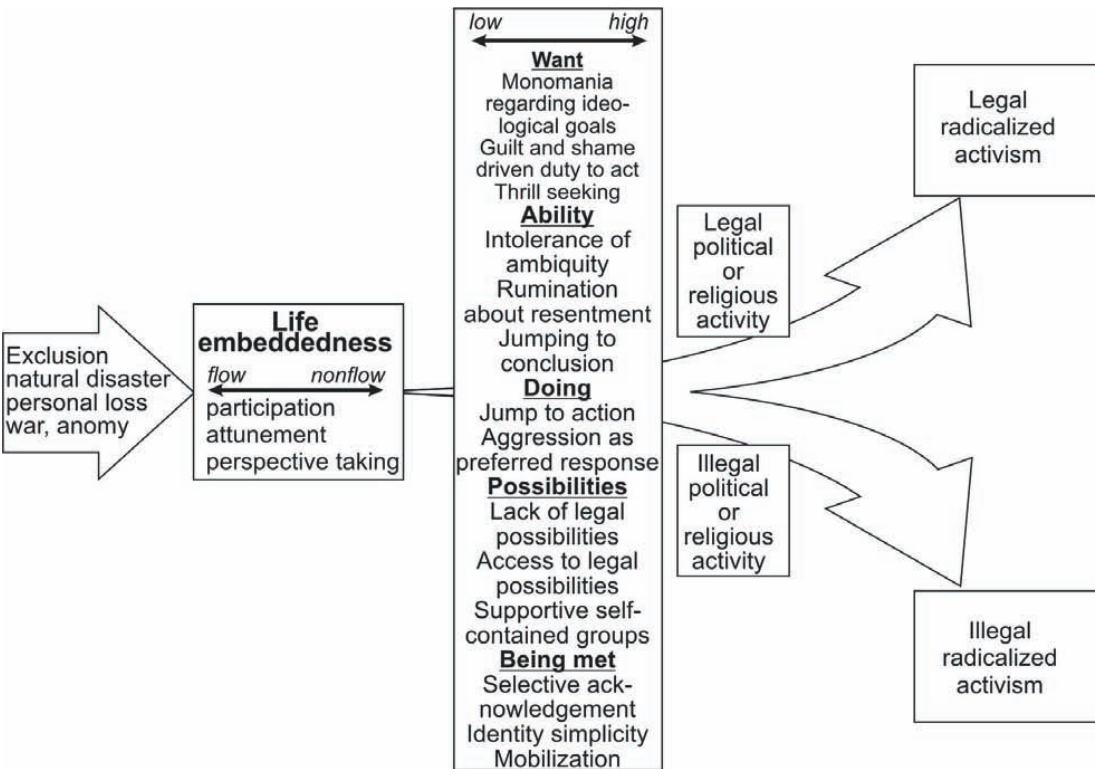
Figure 2. The Life Psychological model of radicalization, triggered by the root causes of threats to fundamental life embeddedness and moderated by socio-cognitive people striving for (re-)construction of life by means of political or religious activities, which in some cases can escalate into extreme radicalized activism. Whether the activities or activism will develop into the legal or illegal forms depends on the states of the risk factors (flow/non-flow and high-/low-risk).

In terms of Life Psychology, radicalized activism – whether political and/or religious – may be defined as a reaction triggered by real or much-feared threats to fundamental life embeddedness resulting in a growing heart-felt wish for and attempt to change the world and general life conditions – the overall goal being a good-enough or better form of life and a meaningful life embeddedness, including safety, security, and agency and flow in general generic life skills.

If for some reason – whether internal (psychological) and/or external (social, cultural, societal) – the possibility of *legal* (re-)constructive activities and activism is blocked or otherwise not an option, *some* people will strive for (re-)constructing life embeddedness by *illegal* means. Therefore, *illegal radicalized activism* can be defined as a reaction triggered by real or much-feared threats to fundamental life embedded-ness resulting in a growing heart-felt wish for and attempt to change the world and general life conditions in order to achieve a good-enough or better life embeddedness by illegal means (violence, acts of terrorism).

The above definitions distinguish between legal and illegal radicalization as two different trajectories. The Aarhus Model therefore consequently rejects the so-called conveyer belt model, which is built on the assumption that there is a continuum go-ing from legal to illegal radicalized activism, that is, the assumption that the path of radicalized trajectory, once someone has embarked on it, will – if not prohibited – in-evitably lead to illegal activism and ultimately terrorism. It has been documented that this is not the case (Moskalenko and McCauley 2009). Legal and illegal activism are two different pathways, and the former does not necessarily lead to the latter. This is of outmost importance as the conveyer belt metaphor runs the risk of identifying so-called "false positives", that is, mis-identifying people fighting their political and religious battles for decent human life embeddedness without ever initiating any illegal or vio-lent actions. False accusation of illegality and dangerousness *may* result in frustration and resentment, which are risk factors for changing to criminal activities.

Of course, legal *radicalized* activism can cause severe trouble and problems on its own both for society and for individuals (for example, for involuntary members, such as children and young people from fundamentalist sects and political groups), but that is another discussion. Here we are concerned with the risk factors of violent radicalization.

As indicated above, only a very few people who experience threats to fundamental life embeddedness will resort to illegal activism. The presumption of the radicalization process presented here is that *the ones who* will reach for illegal activism on grounds of the urge to (re-)construct a desired fundamental life embeddedness *triggered* by these fundamental threats are the ones with a mindset and a skill set that are determined by an additional set of *moderating* risk factors. The risk factors can be further categorized under the headings of the above five skill formatting factors, namely the factors of "want", "ability", "external possibility and conditions", "being met", and "doing". As

previously mentioned, the specific operationalization of these risk factors can be found in Bertelsen (2015). Please also see Figure 2.

It must be underlined that as moderators the above risk factors can be in a state of high-level risk (e.g., experiencing no external possibilities for legal [re-]construction of a preferred form of life embeddedness), or in a state of low-level risk (knowledge of and utilizing existing legal possibilities, or alternatively, taking measures to construct such powers) as well as any state in between.

Thus, the Aarhus model proposes that when the triggering risk factors of threatened fundamental life embeddedness are combined with certain combinations (or risk profiles) of the cognitive and social formation of life skills being in a high-risk state then the risk arises of moving into violently radicalized trajectories. A word of caution may be in place here: Nothing whatsoever can excuse acts of terrorism, but *explaining is not excusing*. We need to develop our explanatory model of risk factors to make early prevention as well as exit strategies even more effective.

Risk Factors, Intervention Strategies and Resilience in Terms of Life Psychology

As demonstrated, the Life Psychological model of violent radicalization offers a theoretical taxonomy of risk factors, in contrast to the well-known randomly composed list of "signs" ("growing a beard", "talking a lot of politics or religion", "wearing political uniforms or traditional clothes" etc.).

The Aarhus Model operates with two sets of risk factors. The first set is the trigger factors of threats to life embeddedness, with the consequence of non-flow in the realization of one's fundamental human life skills – participation, realistic attunement, and perspective taking – regarding (re-)construction of meaningful forms of worthy, safe and secure life embeddedness. The second set comprises high-risk variations of social cognitive, social and societal moderators by which one's life skills and ultimately by which one's fundamental life embeddedness are sought to be (re-)constructed.

Exactly the same model can be used to guide anti-radicalization interventions and programmes, because it identifies important risk factors in regard to building resiliency to the risk of violent radicalization. Resilience-building programmes should, in terms of the Life Psychological model, focus on the *triggering* threats (first and foremost resiliency toward social, cultural and societal exclusion) by empowering the mentee with fundamental life skills towards flow in utilizing the mentee's fundamental generic life skills directed at tolerant and mutual inclusion of different forms of life. Of course, in a wider societal perspective, it is not only about empowering the threatened individual. In the long run it is important to address the factors of exclusion and other threats to fundamental life embeddedness, that is, to focus not only on *agency* but also on (cultural and societal) *structure*.

Furthermore, anti-radicalization programmes and exit programmes should focus on building resilience regarding the second set of *moderating* risk factors, that is, trying by means of education, dialogues, counselling or, in a few cases, also therapy to reform these factors of social cognition and social relationships from high-risk states to low-risk states.

Finally, in the Aarhus Model, the Life Psychological model guides mentor training as well as the supervision of mentors working with specific cases, e.g., how to identify risk factors and promote empowerment and resiliency according to the specific risk factors in the given case.

Thus Life Psychology is at least one way to theoretically and empirically underpin the idea of empowering individuals with fundamental human life skills, with particular reference to inclusion and legal participation in democratic processes and citizenship.

Policy, Policing, Counselling and Science

As is well known, "ought implies can" (a paraphrase of a Kantian notion). It makes no sense to *morally demand* of a person that he or she ought to do something that he or she *cannot do* either because his or her life skills have not yet been developed to a mature state or because of external restraints to freedom of action. Following on from this, it would be futile to even consider a policy, and hence a policing strategy as well as mentoring and counselling, based on inclusion and empowerment of legal life skills, if the targeted mentees basically are not able to develop, educate and form basic human life skills directed at inclusion activities and activism. But, in fact, any mentee *can* – simply because they are human beings striving for a decent life and a good-enough life embeddedness no matter how corrupted, inhuman, and dangerous their activism appears on the surface.

Anti- and de-radicalization efforts should aim at decisively putting an end to any corrupted violent form and search back to the general human being striving for agency and flow in handling fundamental life embeddedness as well as legal forms of activity and activism. The scientific discipline of Life Psychology demonstrates that this *can* be done and therefore it provides a solid scientific grounding for the Aarhus Model of anti-radicalization under the heading of inclusion.

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References

(For more references and a thorough discussion of Life Psychology as well as risk factors based on contemporary literature, please see Bertelsen [2015].)

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